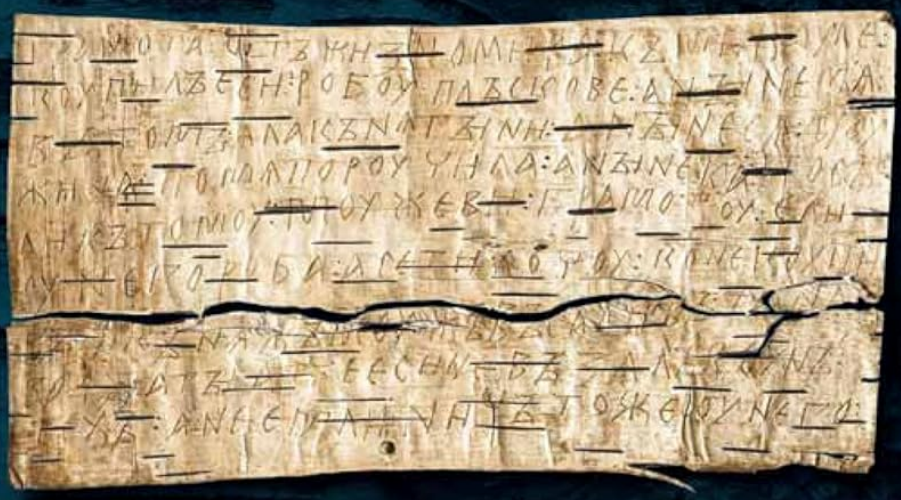
STUDIES IN SLAVIC AND GENERAL LINGUISTICS

OLD RUSSIAN BIRCHBARK LETTERS

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH



BY SIMEON DEKKER

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Old Russian Birchbark Letters

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A Pragmatic Approach

By

Simeon Dekker

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Contents

Preface IX
List of Abbreviations XIII
List of Tables XV
List of Figures XVI
Index of Birchbark Letters XVII

1 **The Field of Study: Berestology** 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Excavations 2
1.3 Dating and Chronology 4
1.4 Users and Uses of the Birchbark Letters 5
1.4.1 *Text Types and Contents* 5
1.4.2 *Literacy in Novgorod* 7
1.4.3 *The Use of Birchbark Letters within the Communicative Event* 10
1.5 The Language: Old Novgorodian 10
1.6 Other Sources: Parchment Documents 12
1.7 Concluding Remarks 13

2 **The Background: Communicatively Heterogeneous Letters** 14
2.1 Introduction 14
2.2 The Problem 14
2.3 Communicative Heterogeneity 18
2.4 The Oral Component 22
2.5 Evaluating Gippius (2004) 24
2.6 Subsequent Research 26
2.7 Discussion 29

3 **Research Question** 31
3.1 Introduction 31
3.2 Research Question 31
3.3 The Choice of Case Studies 32
3.3.1 *Imperative Subjects* 33
3.3.2 *Speech Reporting Strategies* 33
3.3.3 *Epistolary Past Tense* 33
3.3.4 *Assertive Declarations* 34
3.4 Concluding Remarks 34

4 Theory and Methodology: Pragmaphilology 36
4.1 Introduction 36
4.2 Philology 36
4.3 Pragmatics 37
4.4 Pragmaphilology 38
4.5 Orality 39
4.5.1 *The Oral Residue* 40
4.5.2 *Medium and Conception* 40
4.5.3 *Types of Orality* 44
4.5.4 *Trust in Writing* 45
4.6 Use of the Corpus 46
4.7 Illustration of the Pragmaphilological Approach: One Case Study 48

5 Case Study I: Imperative Subjects 51
5.1 Introduction 51
5.2 Imperative Subjects 52
5.2.1 *The Contrastive Function* 55
5.2.2 *The Pragmatic Function* 57
5.3 The Imperative Subject as a Cohesive Device 59
5.4 The Oral Component 67
5.5 Concluding Remarks 69

6 Case Study II: Speech Reporting 71
6.1 Introduction 71
6.2 Speech Reporting Strategies 72
6.3 Some Terminological Considerations 74
6.4 The Data on Birchbark 76
6.4.1 *Direct Speech* 77
6.4.2 *Indirect Speech* 79
6.4.3 *Narrative Reports of Speech Acts* 82
6.4.4 *Free Direct Speech* 85
6.4.5 *Undecided Cases* 88
6.5 Diachronic Considerations 90
6.6 Speech Reporting Strategies on a Scale 92
6.7 Complexity and Context 96
6.7.1 *Complexity* 97
6.7.1.1 The Author's Effort 97
6.7.1.2 The Reader's Effort 99
6.7.1.3 Narrative Reports of Speech Acts 101
6.7.1.4 Concluding Remarks on Complexity 102

6.7.2 *Slipping* 102
6.7.3 *Context-Dependence and Orality* 106
6.8 Functional Considerations 107
6.9 Free Direct Speech Revisited 109
6.10 More Elements of Orality: Dictation and Performatives 111
6.11 Concluding Remarks 113

7 **Case Study III: Epistolary Past Tense** 115
7.1 Introduction 115
7.2 Birchbark Data and Discussion 116
7.3 Epistolary Past Tense in Other Languages 120
7.4 The Data on Birchbark Revisited 122
7.5 Deixis 125
7.5.1 *The Spatial and Temporal Components* 126
7.5.2 *The Personal Component* 130
7.6 Performatives 131
7.7 Ancient Greek Revisited 133
7.8 Concluding Remarks 135

8 **Case Study IV: Assertive Declarations** 137
8.1 Introduction 137
8.2 Theoretical Considerations 139
8.2.1 *Austin* 141
8.2.2 *Searle* 142
8.3 The Data on Birchbark 145
8.3.1 *Assertives and Declarations* 145
8.3.2 *Assertives or Declarations? Orality or Literacy?* 147
8.3.3 *Quantitative Overview* 149
8.4 Other Languages 151
8.4.1 *Semitic Languages* 151
8.4.2 *(Ancient) Greek* 154
8.4.3 *The Optimal Performative Verb Form?* 155
8.4.4 *(Old) English* 157
8.5 Discussion 160
8.5.1 *Directives* 161
8.5.2 *Expressives* 166
8.5.3 *Spreading of the Past Tense* 167
8.5.4 *Diachronic Considerations* 170
8.5.5 *The Status of the Verb: Performative or Not?* 170
8.5.6 *Some Additional Considerations* 173
8.6 Concluding Remarks 174

9 Conclusions 177
9.1 Introduction 177
9.2 General Lines Connecting the Case Studies 178
9.2.1 *Types of Orality* 178
9.2.2 *Shifts of Perspective* 180
9.2.3 *Context-Dependence* 182
9.3 A Transitional Period of *Verschriftlichung* 183
9.4 Final Remarks 186

References 189
Index of Authors 197
Index of Subjects 199

Preface

In 1951, a sensational discovery was made at an excavation site in the medieval part of Velikij Novgorod, a city in the Northwest of Russia. The first birchbark letter was found: a piece of birchbark, into which a text had been incised with a stylus, in a variety of Slavic now known as Old Novgorodian. The assumption that birchbark was used as a writing material in the Middle Ages had been around for a while, but now direct evidence was found and the real first-hand sources could be studied.

In the same year, several more such birchbark letters were unearthed from the medieval cultural layer. The excavations have continued up to the present time, so that at the end of the 2017 archaeological season, we have approximately 1200 birchbark letters available, among which 1100 are of Novgorodian provenance (i.e. found in the city of Velikij Novgorod). The other birchbark letters were found on the territory of other cities in medieval Rus', viz. Staraja Russa, Toržok, Smolensk, Pskov, Tver', Zvenigorod in Galicia, Moscow, Mstislavl', Staraja Rjazan', Vitebsk and Vologda. The timeframe of the letters ranges from the second quarter of the 11th to the late 15th century, which leaves us with over four and a half centuries of attestations.

The unique character of the birchbark letters has warranted due attention, mainly from Russian scholars, so that quite a few works have appeared that treat the birchbark letters as sources for the study of Russian history and the Old Russian language. These remarkable medieval texts are the primary sources for the present study, too. A more detailed introduction of the birchbark letters is presented in chapter 1.

This study aims at providing a further linguistic assessment of the birchbark letters in terms of their function and use. We shall deal with them not so much from a purely grammatical point of view; much work has already been done in that area. Instead, the birchbark letters will be viewed from a pragmatic perspective, and we shall especially be interested in matters of orality and literacy; the background and relevance of this angle will be elaborated on in chapter 2. A more detailed statement of the problem and presentation of the research question will be given in chapter 3, whereas the theoretical and methodological considerations will be introduced in chapter 4.

The perspective of this study is to view the birchbark letters not just as the texts themselves, but in the light of the communicative event as a whole. I shall be arguing that the birchbark letters occupy an intermediate position on the orality/literacy continuum. We shall look at four case studies (chapters 5–8); each of these is concerned with a specific linguistic feature. (The case studies

TABLE 1 *Cities of provenance*

N	Novgorod
Mos.	Moscow
Mst.	Mstislavl'
Psk.	Pskov
Rjaz.	(Staraja) Rjazan'
Smol.	Smolensk
St.R.	Staraja Russa
Torž.	Toržok
Tv.	Tver'
Vit.	Vitebsk
Vol.	Vologda
Zv.	Zvenigorod

will be introduced in § 3.3.) More specifically, I shall be arguing that each of the linguistic features can tell us something about the degree of orality in the birchbark corpus. The early appearance of the birchbark letters (in the sense that the technology of writing was a fairly new phenomenon in medieval Rus') might give rise to the hypothesis that they must show a large number of oral features, and to a certain extent this comes true, but throughout the birchbark period we also see a substantial element of more literate characteristics. All these terms, and their backgrounds, will, of course, be introduced in more detail in the upcoming chapters.

The significance of the present study is enhanced by the interest in historical pragmatics, and more generally language history "from below", which has been shown over the past decade. It is only a logical consequence that this interest should be put to account in relation to the birchbark letters. The unique character of the birchbark corpus (see chapter 1) is certainly a sufficient warrant for devoting a study to this topic.

Finally, a few practical remarks need to be made. Each birchbark letter or fragment thereof that is excavated gets a number. Thus, the first birchbark letter that was found in Novgorod in 1951 is known as N1 (where N stands for Novgorod). Each of the other cities is designated by its own abbreviation, for example Smol.1, St.R.12, Psk.5. These designations have been adopted in this study, too (see Table 1).

Throughout this study, many (parts of) birchbark letters are quoted. The original Old Russian text, which is based on the standard edition (DND and NGB XII; see the list of abbreviations below), is given in Latin transliteration.

TABLE 2 *Key to the transliteration system for Old Russian used in this study*

Transliteration	Cyrillic	Transliteration	Cyrillic
a (not after j)	ѧ	o	ѻ, ѳ, ѡ
b	ѣ	p	п
c	ц	r	ꙗ
č	ч	s	с
d	д	š	ш
e	є	šč	щ
ě	ѣ	t	т
f	ф	u (not after j)	ꙋ, ѹ
g	г	v	в
i	и, і, ї	x	х
ja	ꙗ, ѧ	y	ы
ju	ю	z	з
k	к	ž	ж
l	л	ь	ь
m	м	ъ	ъ
n	н		

For the sake of legibility, modern punctuation has been added. The guidelines for transliteration are given in Table 2.

Numbers are rendered in Arabic numerals, instead of the original Cyrillic letters between double dots. In addition, the following conventions have been adopted, following DND:

- A stroke ‿ on top of a word indicates a contraction.
- -- indicates a damaged piece of birchbark, where each stroke stands for one illegible or presumably lost letter. In cases where an educated guess could be made by the editors, this is given in round brackets. Square brackets indicate those cases where the identity of a visible letter or sign is debatable.
- Incorrect repetitions are put between {}, reconstructed elements between [].
- Words that are not in the original but have, for clarity's sake, been added to the translation are given in square brackets. In cases where only part of a birchbark letter is quoted, the omitted part is denoted by [...], both in the original and in the translation.

Present-day Russian words and names are transliterated according to the standard scientific system (except quotes from Russian scholarly sources, which are given in the original Cyrillic with an English translation).

Some authors (Collins 2001, Schaeken 2011a) use a "normalized transcription" of Old Russian (ignoring the peculiarities of spelling and local morphology), instead of an exact transliteration of the surface form. I have chosen not to employ such a standardized form, as the primary focus of this study is not morphological, but pragmatic. In those cases where a detailed morphological analysis is necessary to the argument, glosses have been added to the Old Russian text. A list of abbreviations can be found below.

The English translations of birchbark texts have been prepared by the present author, with due attention to the modern Russian translations by Zaliznjak (2004) and the Dutch translation of a number of birchbark letters by Schaeken (2012). In order to facilitate the legibility for an international audience, while at the same time trying to reflect the linguistic diversity of the scientific community, quotes from sources in languages other than English are first given in the original (mostly Russian or German), followed by my own translation.

List of Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ACC	accusative case
AOR	aorist
COP	copula
DAT	dative case
DND	*Drevnenovgorodskij dialekt* (Zaliznjak 2004)
F	feminine
GER	gerund
GVNP	*Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova* (Valk 1949)
IMP	imperative
INF	infinitive
IPF	imperfective aspect
KJV	King James Version
M	masculine
Mos.	Moscow
Mst.	Mstislavl'
N	neuter
N	Novgorod
NGB	*Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste*
NOM	nominative case
NRSA	narrative report of speech act
P	past (tense)
PERF	perfect tense
PF	perfective aspect
PL	plural
PPF	pluperfect
PRES	present tense
Psk.	Pskov
PTC	participle
REFL	reflexive
Rjaz.	(Staraja) Rjazan'
RNC	*Russian National Corpus*
SG	singular
Smol.	Smolensk
SRJa XI–XVII	*Slovar' russkogo jazyka XI–XVII vv.*

St.R.	Staraja Russa
Torž.	Toržok
Tv.	Tver’
Vit.	Vitebsk
VOC	vocative case
Vol.	Vologda
Zv.	Zvenigorod

List of Tables

1 Cities of provenance x
2 Key to the transliteration system for Old Russian used in this study xi
3 Communicative conditions 41
4 Verbalization strategies 42
5 Types of communicative heterogeneity 66
6 Instances of communicative heterogeneity 67
7 Direct speech 80
8 Indirect speech 82
9 Narrative reports of speech acts 85
10 Free direct speech 88
11 Speech reporting strategies, in absolute numbers 93
12 Cases of "epistolary tense" on birchbark 123
13 Occurrences of *poslati* and *prislati* on birchbark 130
14 Explicit performatives per class 150
15 Assertive declarations 152
16 Potential past tense performatives (non-assertive declarational) 162
17 Distribution of perfect and aorist forms in assertive declarations 168

List of Figures

1 Photograph of N2 (1360–1380) 2
2 Drawing of N2 (1360–1380) 2
3 Finding places of birchbark letters 3
4 Drawing of N656 (1160–1180) 23
5 Speech reporting strategies, in % of total amount of letters in each period 92
6 Speech reporting strategies, in % of instances of speech reporting in each period 92

Index of Birchbark Letters

Birchbark №	Chapter	Example №	Page №
N3	5	(23)	52
N8	6	(44)	79
N25	6	(58)	89
N43	1	(2)	6
N102	6	(59)	89
N122	5	(30)	57
N138	7	(83)	131
N142	6	(62)	98
	9	(127)	181
N154	6	(55)	87
N173	1	(1)	6
	5	(21)	52
N177	5	(35)	63
N195	6	(46)	81
N198	4	(19)	48
	8	(87)	137
N243	7	(80)	124
	8	(119)	166
N253	5	(36)	63
	9	(126)	180
N286	5	(25)	55
	5	(27)	56
N307	6	(57)	88
N309	8	(120)	167
N318	8	(105)	147
	9	(124)	179
N344	4	(20)	49
	8	(91)	138
N345	7	(68)	116
N354	2	(7)	17
	6	(49)	83
N358	2	(6)	16
	5	(26)	56
	7	(72)	119

(cont.)

Birchbark №	Chapter	Example №	Page №
N363	5	(29)	57
N364	5	(28)	56
N397	2	(14)	24
N406	2	(5)	15
N413	7	(70)	118
N420	2	(9)	20
N443	2	(15)	24
N497	2	(16)	26
N502	6	(45)	79
N509	2	(10)	20
N510	8	(104)	145
N531	6	(64)	103
N550	6	(51)	84
N579	5	(24)	53
N589	2	(4)	15
N656	2	(13)	23
N664	6	(48)	83
N692	8	(106)	150
N697	6	(54)	87
N724	6	(42)	77
N725	6	(60)	90
N755	6	(56)	87
N794	5	(22)	52
N831	1	(3)	12
N879	7	(79)	122
N937	7	(73)	119
N952	6	(38)	72
N954	6	(67)	112
	9	(125)	179
N955	8	(118)	165
N962	6	(65)	110
N964	7	(71)	118
	9	(128)	181
St.R.11	6	(66)	112
	7	(84)	132
	8	(90)	138

Birchbark №	Chapter	Example №	Page №
	9	(123)	179
St.R.15	2	(8)	19
	4	(18)	42
	5	(37)	65
St.R.39	7	(69)	116
Torž.10	7	(82)	128
Tv.5	6	(53)	86
Zv.2	2	(17)	28
GVNP 36	7	(81)	125
GVNP 81	8	(88)	138
GVNP 84	2	(11)	21
	5	(34)	61
GVNP 110	8	(117)	163
GVNP 229	8	(122)	172
GVNP 295	2	(12)	21

CHAPTER 1

The Field of Study: Berestology

1.1 Introduction

The excavation of birchbark letters (alongside a multitude of other historical artefacts) has been going on in Novgorod during many excavation seasons since 1951. These decades of discoveries have opened up an entire field of multifaceted investigations. The whole academic field that studies the birchbark letters in all their aspects is called *berestology*, after the Russian word *beresta* 'birchbark'. This field will be briefly introduced in the present chapter.

In the following sections, the birchbark letters will be positioned within their basic background. The discourse will be illustrated by means of several examples from the texts themselves, in order to provide a livelier picture by way of introduction. We shall deal with, respectively, the excavations of the birchbark letters (§ 1.2), their dating and chronology (§ 1.3), and the users and uses of the birchbark letters (§ 1.4). Finally, we discuss the language of the birchbark letters (§ 1.5) and mention their relation to other available sources (such as parchment documents) covering the same area and period (§ 1.6). Most of the mentioned facts can be found in Zaliznjak (DND, 15–21).

Before we proceed, I would like to mention that the Old Russian text of the birchbark letters, together with a modern Russian translation, photographs and drawings can be found on http://gramoty.ru. This website will be a valuable companion when reading the present study. To gain an impression of what a birchbark letter looks like, see Figure 1. Drawings are usually made to enhance the legibility for present-day researchers (Figure 2).

For a more detailed edition of the birchbark letters, I refer the reader to the official publication series *Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste* [Novgorod Documents on Birchbark; abbreviated as NGB], in which twelve volumes have appeared so far (1953–2015); the latest volume includes the birchbark letters up to and including the 2014 excavation season. All birchbark letters up to and including the excavation season of 2003 have also been incorporated in the second edition of Zaliznjak's (1995/2004) reference work *Drevnenovgorodskij dialekt* [The Old Novgorodian Dialect; abbreviated as DND]. In addition, preliminary publications of each year's new findings appear in the journal *Voprosy jazykoznanija* [Issues in Linguistics]. The most recent article is by Gippius, Zaliznjak & Toropova (2017). An electronic database was compiled by several Russian scholars in 2006, which comprises all birchbark letters up to and including

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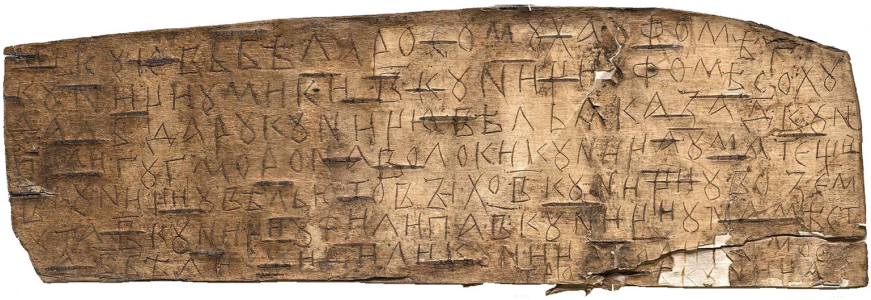

FIGURE 1 *Photograph of N2 (1360–1380)*

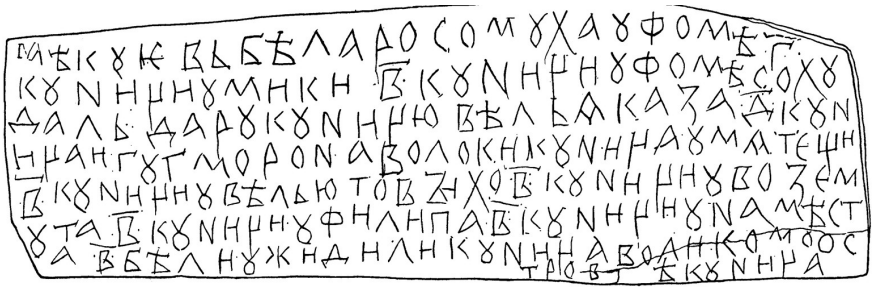

FIGURE 2 *Drawing of N2 (1360–1380)*

N959. An updated and publicly accessible (although somewhat truncated) version of this database was made available online in 2014, as part of the Russian National Corpus (RNC; http://ruscorpora.ru).

1.2 Excavations

Birchbark letters are preserved in the soil. The craft of excavating is a thoroughly traditional and labour-intensive process: each handful of soil has to be sifted attentively by human hands in order to find the smallest bits and parts. Most pieces of birchbark are found as little rolled-up cylinders, which need careful unfolding in order to be studied.

A place in the soil is an unusual way for documents to be preserved. The fact that a perishable substance like birchbark has managed to traverse the centuries in the first place is due to the favourable conditions of the soil. The organic material has been preserved in the marshy clay soil, which is not transparent to oxygen, so that the material does not decay. The birchbark letters have been found primarily in Novgorod, simply because most excavations have been conducted in Novgorod, whereas other medieval cities that might host

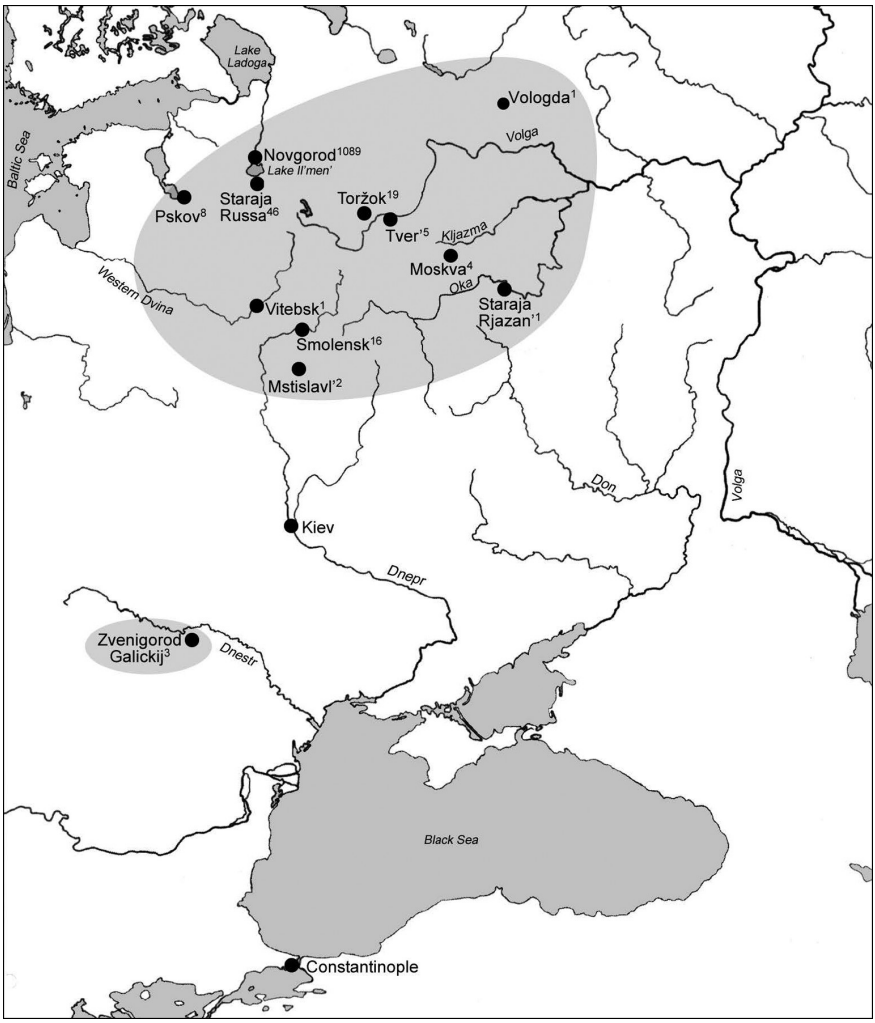

FIGURE 3 *Finding places of birchbark letters*
REPRODUCED FROM SCHAEKEN 2017; NOTE THAT THE 2017 FINDINGS HAVE NOT YET BEEN INCORPORATED IN THIS MAP

numerous birchbark letters have been neglected, doubtlessly due to practical reasons and financial restrictions. But the large number of Novgorodian birchbark letters is also due to the important position that Novgorod occupied in the Middle Ages (cf. § 1.4.2 below). Nevertheless, writing on birchbark is by no means a uniquely Novgorodian phenomenon, but was known in larger parts of medieval Russia, even though findings up to the present day may provide a distorted picture (cf. Figure 3 where each city and the number of findings as of 2016 are indicated).

It should be clarified at this point what we mean when speaking about birchbark letters. Not all of these are fully intact; some letters are severely damaged. Others are fragments that contain just a few signs. In yet other cases, fragments that were found separately turned out to be pieces of the same letter (thus, a letter can have several numbers; some fragments have been found even years after each other). So there are differences in the amount and degree of preservation of each birchbark letter, and thus also in their value and usefulness for research purposes. The birchbark sub-corpus mentioned in the previous section (RNC) comprises only those birchbark letters (up to and including N1015, i.e. the 2010 season) that contain sufficient text so as to be reasonably useful for research purposes, which makes up for a total of 885 birchbark letters containing 19,461 words.

Some birchbark letters are easily legible, others can hardly be deciphered and interpreted, or not at all. This is often a painstaking process, and over the years, several readings of birchbark letters had to be corrected and improved. The latest technical developments for providing detailed digital images have been helpful in enhancing the legibility and improving the reading process throughout.

1.3 Dating and Chronology

The chronological range of the birchbark letters runs from the early 11th to the late 15th century, which leaves us with over 400 years of birchbark attestations. Most birchbark letters have been dated fairly precisely, usually within a margin of 20 years, for instance 1200–1220. This dating process requires some explanation. The two main principles that are at work here are *stratigraphy* and *dendrochronology*. Stratigraphy concerns the successive layers of soil. Obviously, the excavations are conducted layer by layer. This already provides a general timeframe, which is further specified by dendrochronology. By the latter method, patterns of annual rings are studied in pieces of wood that are encountered in the successive layers of soil. The most helpful sources in this respect are the layers of wooden logs that functioned as road pavement. Birchbark letters were often thrown away after use, ending up between the logs of the pavement. Throughout the years, as soon as the cultural layer augmented, new layers of logs were laid out on top of the previous ones. Thus, the birchbark letters that are found between these layers, or close by them, can be dated most precisely.

Only a small minority of birchbark letters cannot be dated in this way. For those cases, there are some other (extra-stratigraphic) methods. First of

all, palaeography plays a role, as well as the study of spelling features, some of which changed over time. Then the letters' contents may provide clues. Formulaic language changed over time, most notably in the incipits (greeting formulae). Then there is information from external sources, such as chronicles. For instance, the name of a prince or other public official may be known to us from a Novgorodian chronicle, which is usually precisely dated. If the same person is mentioned in a certain birchbark letter, its time frame can thus be established. Nevertheless, the stratigraphic and dendrochronological method remains the most important way of dating the birchbark letters.

1.4 Users and Uses of the Birchbark Letters

As was mentioned before, this study approaches the birchbark letters from a pragmatic angle. Taking into account that the field of pragmatics is primarily concerned with language use (see chapter 4), it is important to introduce the users and uses of the birchbark letters. In the following subsections, we shall first look at the text types and contents (§ 1.4.1), and then at the more general topic of literacy in Novgorod (§ 1.4.2). Thirdly, we shall briefly look ahead to the ways in which birchbark letters could function within a communicative event (§ 1.4.3). This latter topic will be further elaborated in the course of the study.

1.4.1 *Text Types and Contents*

What kinds of texts do we find on birchbark? The briefest answer is: all those texts that were not worth the expense of parchment. To be a bit more specific: most of them concern matters of everyday life, which includes topics connected to the family or household affairs, estate management, etc. But the vast majority of birchbark letters have to do with money in some way or another. The character of Novgorod as a significant trade centre led to written records about business, commerce, and debts, but we also encounter texts that deal with law and order, mainly in the area of tax collection. These are just a few catchwords, but throughout this study a lot of examples are presented, by which the vast range of topics is amply illustrated. Connected to this is the question of genres. No formal classification has ever been proposed for this specific corpus (apart from certain provisional and fairly general genre designations used on http://gramoty.ru), but in the course of this study we shall encounter a variety of text types and uses, such as personal letters, notes, contracts, wills, etc.

The majority of birchbark letters are very short; most of them count less than 20 words, though there are notable exceptions, up to 176 words (DND, 20). Most

of the texts are (private) letters, where the author and addressee are mentioned in an incipit formula, such as the following (this is the whole letter):

(1) Poklonъ ot Panfil k Mar--[1] i ko popu. Kupite masleca drevjanogo da prišlite simъ.

'Greetings[2] from Panfil to Mark (?) and to the priest. Buy some lamp oil and send it over here.'

N173 / 1400–1410 / DND, 656

Other texts on birchbark are notes for personal reference, sometimes even children's writing practice, yet others are the outcome of mutual agreements that were entrusted to writing. But we shall encounter a more subtle variety of types of use, in which birchbark letters could perform various functions and be connected to persons in various ways. This variety leads to a difficulty about the designation of the texts from the birchbark corpus: they are often called "birchbark letters", but quite a few of them are not letters in the strict sense of the term. "Birchbark documents" would be another possible term, but it has a connotation of being connected to official or governmental chanceries, and there was no such chancery in Novgorod,[3] so that the birchbark corpus contains only a limited amount of texts that can truly be called "official documents".

The Novgorodians themselves referred to a text on birchbark as *gramota*, as becomes clear from the following letter:

(2) Ot Borisa ko Nostasii. Kako pride sja ***gramota***, tako prišli mi colověkъ na žerepcě, zane mi zděse dělъ mnogo. Da prišli sorocicju; sorocicě zabyle.

1 Here we see the consequence of even a little damage to the edge of the birchbark letter. In his translation, Zaliznjak reconstructs the name as Mark (DND: 656).

2 Literally: "a bow". In incipit formulae, several words can occur that denote the act of bowing down (*poklonъ*, *poklanjanie*, *čelobitъe*). I have taken the liberty to translate these somewhat less literally, as they had become fixed formulae that did not necessarily have anything to do with bowing down.

3 At least, not in the usual sense of the term. What may come closest is the so-called "Petrok circle". Petrok (Petr Mixalkovič) was a high-ranking state official (boyar) who was active between, roughly, 1125 and 1175. He sent and received a large number of birchbark letters (17 are known to us at present, cf. DND: 313, Schaeken 2012: 162).

> 'From Boris to Nastas'ja. As soon as this ***letter*** arrives, send me a man on a stallion, because I have a lot of work here. And send a shirt; I forgot a shirt.'
>
> N43 / 1380–1400 / DND, 651

Gramota is a loanword from Greek (*grammata* 'letters' in the sense of 'characters, signs of the alphabet').[4] But how do we translate it? Letter, document, text? The word *gramota* combines all these meanings. The word is still used in modern Russian, but in the more restricted meaning of 'document, diploma'. Nevertheless, it is also retained for referring to the birchbark letters (*berestjanye gramoty*).

As far as English is concerned, the term "birchbark texts" would seem to be most appropriate, as it is most neutral about the contents and use of the inscriptions on birchbark. Nevertheless, the term "birchbark letters" is so widespread by now, that both terms "birchbark texts" and "birchbark letters" will be used interchangeably throughout this study; this is not meant as an explicit statement about the nature or genre of the texts. Most of the birchbark letters that will be dealt with in the rest of this study will be "letters" in the strict sense of the term, anyway. But as we shall see, the use of "letters" in medieval Novgorod could differ tremendously from the present-day use of letters, especially due to an oral component.

1.4.2 *Literacy in Novgorod*

Among Soviet scholars, the consensus was that the vast majority of people in medieval Novgorod could read and write. In this view, medieval Novgorod was treated like an example of an egalitarian, communist society *avant la lettre*. The presence of many down-to-earth birchbark scribbles about everyday life might indeed easily lead to the assumption that almost everyone could read and write. However, in a medieval context, this is by no means a safe conclusion. How many people could actually read and write? There is only circumstantial evidence, and elements such as dictation and the use of scribes should be taken into account. Although the excavation of a great many (wooden or bone) styli does point to a widespread habit of writing, it should nevertheless be

4 In a more general sense, terms like "message" or "word" could be used to refer to a birchbark letter (the question remains whether these terms really referred to the birchbark letters themselves, or rather to an accompanying oral message that was delivered by a messenger; see § 1.4.3 below, and chapter 2). The word *gramota* was used in a standardized incipit formula in the early birchbark period (12th century, see DND: 37): *gramota ot X-a ko Y-u* 'letter from X to Y'.

maintained contra the Soviet consensus that not everyone was literate. Nor was it, on the other hand, only the clergy and a small upper class. The truth will be somewhere in the middle, also depending on the exact period under consideration. According to Franklin (1985, 15; 2002, 39), in the 11th and 12th centuries it was first and foremost the upper strata of Novgorodian society that were literate. In subsequent centuries literacy spread much more widely, including the lower levels of the urban population and to some extent peasants in the countryside.

We should bear in mind that "[t]he tendency to see a society (or individual) as either literate or oral is over-simple and misleading" (Thomas 1992, 4). In addition, we should be aware that the basic concept of literacy cannot be equated to present-day Western literacy (ibid., 20). So we cannot speak about Novgorodian society as literate in its entirety. Literacy was rather a characteristic of individual persons, who by their mutual use of writing developed a literate culture which functioned within the broader confines of Novgorodian society. A more theoretical discussion of what "literate" and "literacy" is taken to mean in the present study will be presented in chapter 4. For the time being, in this chapter, "literate" will be taken in its common-sense meaning as "able to read and write".

Gippius (2012) devotes an article to the question when and how writing was introduced in Novgorod and to what extent this development was intertwined with the introduction of Christianity. His conclusion is that there was no real use of writing in pre-Christian Novgorod, and that the birchbark letters should be seen as "belonging to Christian culture" (2012, 250). The oldest traces of literacy in Novgorod are religious texts (most notably a wax-tablet with Psalm texts, known as the Novgorod Codex, dated around the year 1000). It is only after 1030 that everyday pragmatic literacy on birchbark appears, after Jaroslav the Wise ordered the education of 300 children from the ranks of the nobility:

> sъbra ot starostъ i ot popov dětii 300 učiti knigam. I prestavisja arxiepiskop Akimь; i bjaše učenikъ ego Efremь, iže ny učaše.
>
> [Jaroslav] gathered 300 children of clergy and nobility to teach them books. And the archbishop Iakim passed away, and his disciple was Efrem, who taught us.
>
> entry from the Novgorod-Sofia group of Russian chronicles, quotation and translation from GIPPIUS 2012, 236

This is usually seen as the beginning of practical literacy in Novgorod (cf. Gippius 2012, 236). The general picture is, then, that writing first served religious

purposes, and after that it spread into other spheres of life. As to its origins, pragmatic literacy in Novgorod was a "spontaneous by-product" (ibid., 237) of ecclesiastical literacy.

The further development and spread of literacy in Novgorod can be seen in the context of the city becoming the centre of a vast empire. The Volxov river, which runs through the city, served as a life line; trade routes extended in all directions. An indicator for the extent of trade links with Western Europe is that the Hanseatic league had an office (*kontor*) in Novgorod. Especially in the later birchbark period (the 14th and 15th centuries), an enormous territory in the North-East fell under the dominion of Novgorod. Landlords sent their tax collectors to this hinterland, in order to employ the vast natural resources by extracting income from the local population. Many transactions of this kind can be traced on birchbark.

The demise of birchbark literacy set in in the 15th century. This was to a large extent due to political reasons. The fatal blow was the fall of Novgorod in 1478, which boiled down to a takeover by Moscow. Novgorod degenerated into a provincial town of marginal importance. A further, more prosaic reason why we do not have any birchbark letters from later periods is the introduction of a sewage system in the 17th and 18th centuries, which caused all organic material in the layers from the 16th century onwards to decay. Even if birchbark letters were written after the 15th century, they simply have not come down to us. But due to the emergence of paper, any significant role of birchbark as a writing material is improbable, anyway.

Much work on orality and literacy in the Western European Middle Ages is oriented towards administrative (chancery) literacy. Clanchy (2012) is a well-known example of this kind of research (cf. the title *From Memory to Written Record*). He provides a historian's view on the role of the London chancery in promoting administrative literacy in England. This concerns a different kind of literacy, which hardly existed in Novgorod or medieval Rus' in general. When referring to Franklin (2002), Clanchy (2012, 342) acknowledges the difference between the English and Russian medieval context: "In the Russian lands written forms of the vernacular were used by both clergy and laity and the emphasis on the agency of central government (as in Anglo-Norman England) was much less." But the absence of a chancery is not the only difference. There is one element that distinguishes all analyses of Western European medieval literacy from that in medieval Russia, viz. the presence and use of Latin. The use of Old Church Slavonic in medieval Russia (cf. §1.5) may be similar to the use of Latin in medieval Western Europe, but a significant difference is that Old Church Slavonic and Old Russian or Novgorodian were so closely related that the difference in use could be seen as scalar,

rather than as a stark contrast between Latin and, for instance, a Germanic vernacular. This is an important point that comes between most accounts of Western-European medieval literacy and their application to medieval Novgorod.

1.4.3 *The Use of Birchbark Letters within the Communicative Event*

In the Preface, I already hinted at the significance of the communicative event as a whole and its relation to the letter's contents. This is a topic that will call for more extensive attention later on in this study. One aspect of the use of birchbark letters can be introduced at this point already. As I said, many of the birchbark letters are letters in the strict sense of the term, addressed from A to B. But then the next question is how the delivery of letters took place. There was no postal system, as far as we know, but the letters must somehow have reached the addressees. The concept of a *messenger*, who delivered the letter to the addressee, will be a central concern to our study. There must have been messengers who just brought a letter from A to B, but we shall also encounter examples which show that the messenger was not just a letter-bearer, but also an active participant in the communicative process, who could elaborate on the message orally, and present the letter as written evidence for his mission. This is a crucial consideration for the rest of this study. More about this extensive function of the messenger will be said in chapter 2, in connection with the introduction of the background for the present study.

1.5 The Language: Old Novgorodian

A most thorough description of the language (Old Novgorodian) in which the birchbark texts are written has been given by Zaliznjak (2004). The title of his book (*Drevnenovgorodskij dialekt* 'The Old Novgorodian dialect') creates the impression that it is a reference grammar. This is very true for the first part, which contains a detailed description of the phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax of Old Novgorodian. The main bulk of the book consists of an edition of the birchbark letters (up to the excavation season of 2003), complete with translations into Modern Russian, as well as commentaries and observations about orthographical and grammatical peculiarities encountered in each letter. This makes that the scope of the book reaches far beyond that of a reference grammar.

But let us take a step back and turn to a more basic positioning of the language. Old Novgorodian is a historical variety of Russian, which is a Slavic language. The modern Slavic languages are divided into an Eastern, Southern and

Western branch. Present-day Russian (along with Belorussian and Ukrainian) belongs to the Eastern branch. Now, to determine what the relationship is between Old Novgorodian and Contemporary Standard Russian, we need to sketch the medieval sociolinguistic situation in some more detail. The church used a South Slavic variety, Church Slavonic, as the language of liturgy and religious writing. At the other end of the spectrum there is the local dialect, Old Novgorodian. Then there is a third idiom, which is based on the dialect of Kiev, which functioned as a vehicle of communication between the various regional centres of trade (Kiev, Novgorod, Suzdal', etc.). Zaliznjak (DND, 5) calls this "supra-dialectal Old Russian".[5] These are all Slavic language varieties; it is unclear to what extent medieval Novgorodians would have thought of them as distinct languages, or just as distinct registers of the same language, as they would have been acquainted with all three to some extent.

Some attempts have been made to classify Old Novgorodian as a separate Northern branch of the Slavic languages. The mainstream view is still that it is an East Slavic variety, though it has some significant deviations from the "supra-regional" variety of Old Russian which emanated from Kiev.

As may be expected for a medieval vernacular, nothing about the language is standardized in the present-day sense of the word. The spelling is especially versatile and prone to variation. This variation comes in addition to the phonological and morphological distinctions between Old Novgorodian and supra-dialectal Old Russian, which makes the system especially diversified and provides us with a rich blend of unexpected variants.

At the present stage of research, we have a pretty clear picture about Novgorodian dialectal features, mainly thanks to Zaliznjak (DND). Thus, the formal and grammatical aspects of the Old Novgorodian "dialect" have been described in great detail. These will not be gone into at present (even though most of the literature on this topic is available in Russian only). Our task is to analyse language *use*: the pragmatics of Old Novgorodian (see chapter 2).

5 Literally "наддиалектная форма древнерусского языка" 'the supra-dialectal form of the Old Russian language'. The term "Standard Old Russian", which is sometimes used, is an anachronism (cf. Vermeer 1997 contra Zaliznjak 1995). In the Preface to the second edition of DND, Zaliznjak (DND: 3) replies that Vermeer's criticism is the result of a misunderstanding, due to interference from English (the Russian word *standartnyj* does not mean "standard" in the sense of "normative", but was rather meant as "common, i.e. devoid of individual dialectal features"); nevertheless, Zaliznjak changes the term from "standard" to "supra-dialectal" in the second edition of DND (2004).

The sociolinguistic implications of the use of the Novgorodian dialect as opposed to supra-regional Old Russian and Church Slavonic have been discussed to some extent, e.g. by Vermeer (1997) and Schaeken (2011b). Some medieval writers on birchbark were well aware of the distinction and the implications for the social hierarchy and the circle in which the text was meant to function. The use of Church Slavonic was restricted to religious texts (though some elements of Church Slavonic influence can also be found in secular writing, such as birchbark letters written by monks, etc.). The division of labour between Old Novgorodian and supra-regional Old Russian is more subtle.

1.6 Other Sources: Parchment Documents

Birchbark letters are not the only texts that have come down to us from medieval Novgorod. Apart from parchment documents such as political treaties, business contracts, depositions, grants, etc., there were also religious texts and chronicles, but these latter are so different from the birchbark letters (in terms of contents and register) that they hardly need to be mentioned here. Such sources have not been used in the research for this study. The parchment documents from Novgorod and Pskov, known as GVNP (*Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova*), have been used as an additional source of linguistic data; they have not been investigated systematically, but are sometimes quoted by way of illustration, or to highlight a contrast with the birchbark letters.

The birchbark letters differ from the parchment documents in several respects. Most importantly, the aims and functions were different. Parchment documents were meant to be preserved as records of all kinds of transactions. Birchbark letters were ephemeral, meant for the business of the day, and to be discarded afterwards. It can also be that a birchbark letter served as a first draft for a parchment letter, such as a will or grant. We find an indication for this at the end of a long letter (one of the longest known birchbark letters, 16 lines on two sides of the birchbark):

(3) [...] A ty, Stepane, рьгъpesavo na xarotitiju, posъli žь.

'[...] And you, Stepan, having copied [this] onto parchment, send [it] away.'

N831 / 1140–1160 / DND, 303

Apart from the parchment documents, there are some other sources of everyday writing. These include inscriptions on domestic objects and utensils, notes

in the margin of books, and, most importantly, inscriptions on church walls.[6] These sources, though fascinating, fall outside the scope of the present study.

1.7 Concluding Remarks

There are various reasons why the Novgorod birchbark letters are especially significant for the field of Slavic studies. The fairly long timeframe of birchbark literacy provides an exceptional potential to study linguistic features diachronically. For the early period (especially the 11th century), hardly any other sources are available at all, both as regards the language (Old Novgorodian) and the sphere of use (everyday life) of the birchbark letters.

The importance of the birchbark letters also stretches beyond the Slavic area. If we compare the available sources of medieval European everyday writing, the results are quite meagre. The only corpus that comes close are the rune sticks from Bergen, Norway.[7] Notwithstanding, apart from the field of Slavic philology, the birchbark letters are hardly known and appreciated in broader circles of linguists or historians.[8] This is unfortunate, and mostly due to the inaccessibility of Russian-language publications for a wider international audience. Nevertheless, the wealth and unicity of the material would justify a thorough consideration. It is hoped that the present study will add to this awareness.

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6 Inscriptions on church walls are often written in a form heavily influenced by Church Slavonic. Especially in 2014, quite a few new inscriptions were found on the walls of the Georgievskij sobor in Jur'ev monastery near Novgorod. A significant number of inscriptions have also been found in the Sofijskij sobor in the Novgorod Kremlin.

7 There are, to be sure, some other corpora from earlier periods and different areas, such as the Vindolanda tablets from Roman Britain, papyri from Hellenistic Egypt, and even clay tablets from Ancient Babylonia; these are also instances of everyday writing. However, it is not my intention to establish their degree of similarity to the birchbark letters in this study.

8 Schaeken (forthc.) provides a comprehensive overview and discussion of the corpus, including English translations, aimed at exactly these broader scholarly circles.

CHAPTER 2

The Background: Communicatively Heterogeneous Letters

2.1 Introduction

Before we are able to formulate the research question in some more detail (which will be done in chapter 3), we need to review some issues that form the background for the research question. In § 2.2, some examples will be given of birchbark letters that are hard to interpret for the modern reader; these will be identified as instances of "communicative heterogeneity" (as defined in § 2.3) and explained with reference to an oral component (§ 2.4). This is what constitutes the essence of Gippius (2004) (as evaluated in § 2.5). Gippius's research forms the basis of a pragmatic approach to the birchbark letters. In § 2.6, some subsequent studies will be reviewed. These studies all concern individual texts, whereas the present study is intended to contribute to this pragmatic research area in a more systematic way (§ 2.7).

2.2 The Problem

The grammar and linguistic structure of Old Novgorodian have been extensively studied. However, if we read the birchbark letters, the grammatical knowledge that has been accumulated over the decades does not always help us to actually understand what the texts are meant to convey. We do not always understand why the texts were phrased the way they are; the meaning of some texts remains particularly puzzling. In part, this is due to the "bad data problem" (Labov 1994, 11), which means that we are unable to interpret the letters in all details like the original addressees, because they knew the background and context, whereas we do not.[1] After all, the letters were never intended for us; but

1 Obviously, I do not mean that the data are good for nothing. Whatever the drawbacks are, the birchbark letters remain a useful and unique resource for conducting linguistic research. A well-defined methodological framework can help to overcome the limited nature of the data, as is evidenced by the present study.

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more remains to be said. The structure and textual organization of quite a few birchbark letters will strike modern readers as unusual. This will be illustrated by means of several birchbark letters. Here is the first example:

(4) Ot Žily k Čjudinu. Dai Ondrěju rublь. Ne daš li, čto mně ni dospěje v ruble tomь neči jati, to tvoja. Ot Žilě k Savě. Dai ----- poltinu [...]

'From Žila to Čudin. Give Ondrej a rouble. If you won't give [it], any loss [he] will cause me to take because of that rouble is yours. From Žila to Sava. Give ----- a *poltina*[2] [...].'

N589 / 1340–1360 / DND, 559

The final part of N589 has not been preserved, but nevertheless, it is clear that this text consists of two separate letters. Both were written by Žila, but the first one is addressed to Čudin, whereas the second letter is addressed to Sava. So we have two letters on one piece of birchbark, that are graphically linked up in a continuous flow of text. How can this situation be accounted for? The most sensible solution is to consider a scenario in which the letter is entrusted to a courier (messenger), who brings it to Čudin first, reads out the first message, which is intended for Čudin, then takes the letter on to Sava, to whom he reads out the second message. In order to consolidate this claim, some more letters can be presented.

(5) [...] i ribi i maslo i siri—a to prazka 3 godo ----[dai] to. A mi tobi, ogine Ofonose, klanjaesme. A daro vedaeše: 3 kunici 3 godo. A pocne prošati ženi ili sinovi, ženi 2 beli a sinu belka.

'... and fish and butter and cheeses—this is the rent for 3 years, [...] this. And we bow down to you, lord Ofonos. And you know the tribute: 3 marten for 3 years. And if he starts asking for his wife or his son, then 2 squirrels for his wife, and a squirrel for his son.'

N406 / 1360–1380 / DND, 593

This letter provides an even stronger indication for a scenario in which the messenger reads the letter out aloud in front of the addressee. Interestingly, this letter consists of two parts. In the first part, farmers address their landlord,

2 A *poltina* is half a rouble.

specifying the rent and tribute that they propose to pay him, ending with the standard closing formula *A mi tobi, ogine Ofonose, klanjaesme* 'And we bow down to you, lord Ofonos'. The second part, which starts with *A daro vedaeše* 'And you know the tribute', looks like an instruction to the farmers' representative (i.e. the messenger), to remind him of the tribute and instruct him in case the landlord is not satisfied with the proposal and asks for more. Thus, the letter was meant to be read out by the representative, but not to be handed over to lord Ofonos: obviously, the latter was not supposed to read the instruction to the messenger.

The procedures of dictation and reading out aloud are less unusual than they may seem from a present-day perspective: they have been described as usual practice in many ancient cultures,[3] as well as in the Middle Ages. In medieval Europe, letter writing was "an intellectual skill using the mouth rather than the hand" (Clanchy 2012, 273), i.e. letters were often dictated. In this context, positing an oral element is not at all anomalous.

Bearing in mind the two parts of which the previous letter turned out to consist, we can turn to another letter which addresses more than one person, i.e. more than just the person who is mentioned in the address formula:

(6) Poklonъ ospži mtri. Poslalъ jesmь s posadnicimъ Manuilomъ 20 bělъ k tobě. A ty, Nestere, pro cicjakъ prišli ko mni gramotu, s kimъ budešъ poslalъ. A v Toržokъ priixavъ, koni kormi dobrymъ sinomъ. K žitnici svoi zamokъ priloži. A na gumni stoi koli molotjatь. A koni kormi ovsomъ pri sobi, a v miru. A v klitь rži s---------- peremirъ i ovesъ tako že. A skazyvai komu nadobi rož li ili ovesъ [...]

'Greetings to madam, mother. I have sent you 20 squirrel pelts with the governor's [man] Manuil. And you, Nester, send me a letter about the helmet, [to let me know] with whom you will send it. And when you arrive in Toržok, feed the horses with good hay. Attach your own lock to the granary. And remain on the threshing floor when the threshing is being done. And have the horses fed with oats in your presence and in [good] measure. And in the barn rye [...] measure it again and the oats, too. And let [me] know who needs rye or oats [...].'

N358 / 1340–1360 / DND, 550

3 Cf. Charpin (2010) for Ancient Mesopotamia, Thomas (1992) for Ancient Greece, etc.

This letter was written by Onsifor (as we know from N354, written in the same hand; see the following example) to his mother (as is indicated by the salutation). However, after one sentence, Onsifor already switches to address Nester, which is explicitly signalled by the phrase *A ty, Nestere* 'and you, Nester' (imperative subject + vocative; see chapter 5). Consequently, although the letter is formally addressed to "madam, mother", its greater part is addressed to Nester (who apparently was a steward to the family; cf. DND, 551). Thus, like the previous example, this letter also consists of two parts. The following letter has a similar organization, although Nester is now not explicitly addressed:

(7) Čelomъ bitije k ogži mtri ot Onsifora. Veli Nesterju rublь skopiti da iti k Ijuriju k sukladniku. Molisja jem čto by konь kupilъ. Da idi s Obrosiemъ k Stepanu, žerebii vozmja. Ili vozmetъ rublь, kupi i drugii konь. Da prošai ou Jurija poltini da kupi soli s Obrosijemъ. A mixi i serebra ne dobudetь do puti, pošli s Nesteromъ simъ. Da pošli 2 kozi, korjakulju, pjatenъ, polъsti, veretiša, mixi i medvidno. Veli u Maksima ou ključnika pšenki poprošati. [Reverse] I didu molisja čto by ixalъ v Ijurijevъ monastirъ pšenki poprošalъ. A sdise ne nadiisja.

'A request to madam, mother, from Onsifor. Order Nester to get a rouble together and to go to Jurij, the business associate. Ask him to buy a horse. And go with Obrosij to Stepan, having taken my share. If he takes the rouble, buy another horse, too. And ask Jurij for a *poltina* and buy salt with Obrosij. And if he cannot get the fur and the money for the journey, send it over here with Nester. And send two tripods, a fork, branding-irons, felt cloths, canvas covers, sacks, and a bearskin. Give instructions to ask Maksim, the manager, for wheat.
[Reverse] And ask grandfather to go to Jur'jev monastery [and] ask for wheat. And there is no hope [of getting it] here.'

N354 / 1340–1360 / DND, 550

Like the previous example, this letter is also addressed to "madam, mother". Onsifor asks her to give an instruction to Nester, viz. "to get a rouble together and to go to Jurij, the business associate". Then, "ask him to buy a horse". Who should buy a horse? Is mother supposed to ask this to Nester, or should Nester ask this to Jurij? The latter is much more likely (due to the choice of the verb).[4] And what about the subsequent instructions? Does Onsifor really order

4 Mother should "order" (*velěti*) Nester to get a rouble together. Nester should "ask" (*molitisja*)

his mother around to go to Stepan, buy a horse, buy salt? That seems rather unlikely. Alternatively, is it Nester who should carry out these instructions, even though it is "madam, mother" to whom the letter is formally addressed? The implication would be that Nester is addressed without an explicit signal to indicate a switch of addressee. But why should this be the case? Consider the alternative: "Order him to ask him to buy a horse. And order him to go with Obrosij to Stepan, taking my share. Order him, if he takes the rouble, to buy another horse, too. And order him to ask Jurij for half a rouble and to buy salt with Obrosij". This would be an excessively wordy and long-winded formulation. But, one might object, if we read on, we do encounter Nester again in the third person: "send him over here with Nester". That is true, but it shows that this part of the letter must be addressed to mother again. Thus, the letter is divided into three parts: it is addressed, consecutively, to mother—Nester—mother.

2.3 Communicative Heterogeneity

The two letters discussed above (N354 and N358) can serve as an illustration of a phenomenon identified by Gippius (2004). As we have seen, both letters are addressed to more than one person; thus, the letters consist of several parts, each with its own addressee. Gippius (2004, 185) calls this "коммуникативная неоднородность" 'communicative heterogeneity'. The definition given by him runs as follows (ibid.):

> [...] оформленное как единый текст письменное сообщение распадается на части, обладающие различной ролевой структурой, то есть имеющие разных авторов или адресатов.
>
> [...] a written message, composed as a single text, is divided into parts, each of which has a different role structure, i.e. the parts have different authors or addressees.[5]

Jurij to buy a horse. These two verbs have different connotations that reflect different social relations. Nester is a subordinate whom mother "orders", but he, in turn, "asks" Jurij, who is his superior.

5 So far, we have only seen communicatively heterogeneous letters with different addressees; for examples with different authors, see (16–17) below.

The difference is that in N358 the switch of addressee is made explicit ("and you, Nester, [...]"), whereas in N354 it is implicit; the switch can only be inferred from the context there. This is the difference between "overt" and "hidden" communicative heterogeneity. Another letter with hidden communicative heterogeneity is the following:

(8) Ot Petra kъ Vasilevi. Vъdai 6 kounъ i grivьnou Vyšjatě. Ali ti ne dastь a pristavi na nь otrokъ.

'From Petr to Vasil'. Give 6 *kunas* and a *grivna* to Vyšata. If he doesn't give [them], then send a court official after him.'[6]

St.R.15 / 1140–1160 / DND, 328

If we look at this letter, something may strike us as awkward. The letter is addressed to Vasil', who has to give a certain amount of money to Vyšata. But then, apparently, Vyšata is also supposed to give something, because, if he doesn't, Vasil' should send a court official after him. Theoretically, this is possible, of course. But such a laborious scenario can be dispensed with if we allow for a different interpretation, viz. that the letter consists of two parts that are addressed to two different persons. First, Vasil' is addressed: "Give 6 *kunas* and a *grivna* to Vyšata." The next sentence is intended for Vyšata: "If he [i.e. Vasil'] doesn't give [them], then send a court official after him." In this way, the text can be understood as an order to Vasil' (to pay to Vyšata) on the one hand, and a mandate for Vyšata (to take action in case of non-payment), on the other. At the same time, however, the sentence addressed to Vyšata is also indirectly intended as a threat to Vasil', to force him to pay the desired amount: he gets to know the consequences if he refuses to pay. Thus, Petr addresses Vasil' and Vyšata consecutively, as if both were standing in front of him. The author considered this structure pragmatically optimal. It creates a "presence effect", as if Petr gave oral instructions (Gippius 2004, 194). The letter must have been read when both addressees were together; most probably, the letter was handed over to Vasil' by Vyšata. It then served as a mandate: by it, the debtor is called upon to pay, and the letter-bearer is authorised to collect the debt.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in the following letter:

6 A *kuna* is a marten skin, which was used as a monetary unit; a *grivna* is a silver ingot of around 200 grams.

(9) Ot Panka kъ Zaxarьi · i ko Ogafonou. Prodalъ esmь sorokъ bobrovъ Miljate na desjati grivnъ serьbra. Olna že · vzьmъ serьbro, to že dai bobry. A dai serobro Zaxarьi.

'From Panko to Zaxar'ja and to Ogafon. I have sold forty beaver skins to Miljata for ten silver *grivnas*. When you-SG receive the silver, then give-SG the beaver skins. And give-SG the money to Zaxar'ja.'

N420 / 1240–1260 / DND, 478

As we can see, this letter is addressed to two persons. However, in the main body of the text, instructions are given in singular imperatives (twice *dai* 'give-2.SG'). Why is this? Because Zaxar'ja is mentioned in the last sentence, one might suppose that the letter is actually addressed to Ogafon only. In that case, Ogafon should receive the silver, and then give it to Zaxar'ja. But why, then, should Zaxar'ja be mentioned as one of the addressees? If we want to explain this, we can consider the following scenario: Panko and Miljata have agreed on a transaction involving the sale of beavers (skins). Zaxar'ja is the steward of Panko, Ogafon is the steward of Miljata. The first phrase (*Prodalъ esmь* ... 'I have sold ...') is addressed to both addressees and is a general statement; the second phrase addresses Zaxar'ja, who is exhorted to give the beaver skins, and then, in the final phrase, Ogafon is ordered to give the silver to Zaxar'ja. Thus, both addressees are addressed consecutively. In this way, the letter functions as a mandate for Zaxar'ja.

Some letters contain linguistic clues that help us to detect hidden communicative heterogeneity. In the case of the following letter, this concerns the imperative in the singular vs. the plural form:

(10) Ou Voislava vъzьmi 10 kounъ istinь a 5 kounъ namomъ: ne vъdale dъvoixъ namъ. | Ou Něžjatь vъzьmi desjatь kounъ i grivьnou. | Ou Boudotь vъzьmi grivьnou naměnouju. | Ou Bojana vъzьmi šestě kounъ namьnouju Ozerevaxъ. A otrokou vъdaite po kouně moužь.

'From Voislav take-SG 10 *kunas* principal and 5 *kunas* as interest: he hasn't paid the interest for two terms. | From Nežata take-SG ten *kunas* and a *grivna*. | From Budota take-SG a *grivna* as interest. | From Bojan take-SG six *kunas* as interest in Ozerevy. And give-PL the officer a *kuna* each.'

N509 / 1160–1180 / DND, 361

The communicative boundary (i.e. the point where a switch of addressee takes place) occurs after the word *Ozerevaxъ* 'in Ozerevy' (place name). The scenario

is the following: first, a tax-collector is called upon to collect certain amounts from certain persons. But then, these persons are addressed and ordered to pay the tax-collector a *kuna* in addition to the already mentioned sum, as wages for his work.[7]

Although the phenomenon of *hidden* communicative heterogeneity seems to be unique to the medium of birchbark, *overt* communicative heterogeneity occurs in the corpus of parchment letters from Novgorod and Pskov (GVNP) as well, as the following example shows:

(11) Se jazъ knjazь velikii Ivanъ Danilovičь vseja Rusi požalovalъ esmь sokolnikovъ pečerskixъ, xto xoditь na Pečeru, Žilu sъ drugi. [...] Xto li čerezъ moju gramotu, čto u nixъ vozьmetъ, i jazъ knjazь velikii kažnju, zaneže mi ljudi tě nadobny. A prikazalъ esmi ixъ bljusti Merkurьju; a ***ty***, Merkurei, po moei gramotě bljudi ixъ, a vъ obidu ixъ ne vydavai nikomu.

'Herewith I, grand duke Ivan Danilovič of all Rus', grant [tax exemption] to the Pečoran falconers, those that go on [the river] Pečora, to Žila and others. [...] I, the grand duke, will punish anyone who takes [tribute] from them in spite of my letter, because I need these people. And I hereby order Merkurii to protect them; and ***you***, Merkurii, protect them according to my letter, and do not give them over for insult to anyone.'

GVNP 84 / 1328–1341 / VALK 1949, 142

First of all, in (11), the grand duke makes a general statement in an official document (*žalovannaja gramota*, i.e. what in the English monarchy would be called a letter-patent, granting certain privileges) not explicitly addressed to anyone in particular. Subsequently, he starts addressing someone personally, viz. Merkurii. Similar instances can be found in other parchment letters; one more example should suffice here. It is a will, first containing a general statement of bequest, where subsequently "my brother Ivan" is addressed directly:

(12) Vo imja Otca i Syna i Svjatogo Duxa. Se azъ rabъ božii inokъ Alekšěi spisaxъ rukopisanie pri svoemъ životě. [...] A ***ty***, brate moi Ivane, ne vstupaise ni vo čto ž [...].

7 Punctuation on birchbark is generally unstable and not very telling in any respect. Nevertheless, it is somewhat strange that the writer inserts graphical boundaries (in the form of a vertical stroke) between the sections that pertain to the various debtors, but, of all places, not at the communicative boundary. We would, after all, consider the latter to be a more important boundary, and worth designating.

> 'In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hereby I, God's servant, monk Aleksei, write a testament at [the end of] my life. [...] And ***you***, my brother Ivan, do not interfere with anything, [...].'
>
> GVNP 295 / ca. 1456 / VALK 1949, 293–294

We can enlarge on the abovementioned phenomenon of hidden communicative heterogeneity by looking at what Clark (1996, 8) calls the "basic language setting", in which face-to-face communication is achieved by participants' joint activities at the same place and time. Deviation from the basic setting requires "special techniques" (ibid., 11), in order to make up for the lack of "directness" or "basicness". For example, applying these terms to the present topic, one characteristic of the basic setting is "visibility", i.e. "the participants can see each other" (ibid., 9). Thus, by way of eye contact, they can establish and reinforce contact with each other; in other words, they negotiate speaker selection (see § 5.4 for a more detailed description of this term) primarily through non-verbal interaction. In a non-basic setting, such as a letter, other ways have to be found to indicate the relations between speech act participants. One such way is to use a personal pronoun and a vocative, as we saw in (5): *A ty, Nestere* 'and you, Nester'.[8] When "special techniques" like this are absent, as in (8), an obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the basic setting must be implied. To put it differently, if no "special techniques" are used, the only way to achieve a felicitous contact between participants of a communicative act is in a basic, i.e. face-to-face, setting. Thus, reasoning from a somewhat different angle, we would arrive at the same conclusion as does Gippius (2004), viz. that a basic, i.e. oral, setting is relied on to convey the message felicitously. A letter that is dictated, transmitted and finally read out aloud can be seen as a "mediated spoken setting" (Clark 1996, 5), in which "special techniques" can be used in inverse proportion to the extent to which the letter-bearer recreates a basic setting when reading the letter out aloud. The greater the messenger's role is, the fewer "special techniques" are necessary to ensure a successful communicative act.

2.4 The Oral Component

What combines the discussion of the abovementioned birchbark texts is that they contain a somewhat mysterious message, which is clarified by a new

8 This aspect will be further elaborated on in chapter 5.

FIGURE 4 *Drawing of N656 (1160–1180)*

interpretation in the light of (hidden) communicative heterogeneity. Such interpretations are only possible if we allow for an oral component.

Although the oral component serves as the main explanation for communicative heterogeneity, the latter is not the only indicator of an oral component in birchbark communication. Gippius (2004) identifies several other characteristic instances which show the central role which the messenger or letter-bearer played in the communicative act. Let us discuss some of them, by looking at a few examples.

(13) [...] Koulotъke gramъta kъ Xoudъ[...]. Idi reki Plьskovou.

'[From] Kulotka a letter to Xudo[ta]. Go to Pskov [and] tell [them].'
N656 / 1160–1180 / DND, 357

This letter is wholly intact, with only the left edge missing (see Figure 4).

So apart from the address formula, the message consists of only three words (*Idi reki Plьskovou*). All the rest is left to the context. So who was meant to say what? Apparently, the addressee knew what he was supposed to tell in Pskov. Therefore, he must have been instructed orally about this. The most plausible option is, then, that "Go and tell it in Pskov" is addressed to the messenger, who has been instructed by the author, and now carries this letter, which is meant to sanction the spoken word that he is supposed to deliver in Pskov.[9] The reason why the message itself is not included in the letter may have to do with its secrecy (DND, 357), or otherwise just because it was felt unnecessary to include details that the messenger would convey orally anyway.

9 The question then remains: who is Xudota? Is Xudota the name of the messenger, or is it the name of the person in Pskov to whom the messenger was supposed to deliver the message? Gippius (2004: 205) seems to consider the second option the most plausible one. In that case, we are actually confronted with a communicatively heterogeneous letter: the incipit is addressed to the receiver of the message in Pskov, and the second sentence is addressed to the (anonymous) messenger and meant as an accreditation for him in the face of Xudota.

The following two letters are even more "truncated":

(14) Kъsnjatinja gramata.

'Kosnjatin's letter.'
N397 / 1180–1200 / DND, 453

(15) Ot Domitra {ko} ko Felarju i ko Nesodile.

'From Dmitr to Flar' and to Nesdila.'
N443 / 1200–1220 / DND, 438

These complete letters contain just a heading, without any real content. In the same vein as the previous example (13), these "truncated" messages will have been handed over by a messenger. Thus, the function of both letters is that of a symbolical written sign which accompanies and ratifies a spoken message (Gippius 2004, 204), or possibly a shipment of goods. This kind of writing is more of a symbolical than of a practical kind. Of course, most birchbark letters are of a less extremely truncated kind, but still, quite a few letters provide indications for a large role of the messenger.

2.5 Evaluating Gippius (2004)

All the above examples serve as justification to consider the oral component as a primary force in explaining the pragmatic structure and organization of birchbark letters. This can be called the principal point made by Gippius (2004). A communicatively heterogeneous textual organization (especially in its hidden form) would definitely be awkward in a present-day letter. So why was it not awkward in medieval Novgorod? The explanation given by Gippius (2004) revolves around the person of the messenger, who was more than just a letter-bearer. He not only delivered the letter, but also orally elaborated on its contents (which often served as an *aide-mémoire* or to lend authority to the more elaborate oral message). The role of the messenger is the clearest manifestation of an oral component in birchbark communication. Without this oral component, the letters would indeed come across as cryptic and hard to understand.

According to Gippius (2004, 203), the hidden communicative heterogeneity of a birchbark letter can often be explained in terms of the structure of an oral dialogue that has been imitated in writing. The main characteristic of this oral

structure is that the situational context is relied on and that explicitly marking the switch from one conversational partner to another is only optional. Gippius (2004, 204) argues that the oral structure of birchbark letters must be dated back to the earliest era when Rus' had just been converted to Christianity, and when written communication in the sphere of everyday life and business was of a secondary and facultative kind. Thus, writing did not just fulfil a practical function, but served as the symbolic sanctioning of an oral message (Bulanin 1997, 151).

Such an oral structure of writing is possible thanks to the messenger. The status of the messenger is such that he licences the communicatively heterogeneous structure of the letters that we have seen. In this way, the messenger serves as the main explanatory force for the peculiarities in the contents and structure of a number of birchbark letters.

The pragmatic line of analysis that has been initiated by Gippius (2004) involves a switch from a purely grammatical to a more functional perspective of the birchbark letters. The approach can indeed be called "ground-breaking" (Schaeken 2011a, 1) for the field of berestology. Let us once more sum up and evaluate the main merits of Gippius's (2004) article.

- The article's first merit is that it draws attention to a peculiar kind of textual organization (communicatively heterogeneous texts, overt and hidden), thereby providing new and more exact interpretations for a number of previously mysterious birchbark letters.
- The second important point is that this textual organization is possible thanks to an oral component. This oral component is explained by the role of the messenger, who could elaborate on the text and make up for the lack of explicitness. It follows, then, that the birchbark letters are to a large extent context-dependent.
- Thirdly, communication on birchbark was more than just a utilitarian communicative tool.[10] It also served as a mandate which conferred authority upon the messenger to execute affairs on behalf of the sender.

Although Gippius does not explicitly mention the term, an important principle that underlies his interpretations is the notion of "trust in writing". It can even be contended that his argumentation hinges on trust in writing to a large extent; he stresses the function of quite a few communicatively heterogeneous birchbark letters as being mandates. This often involves that they give accred-

10 This is a point that is worked out in more detail by Schaeken (2011a) (see § 2.6 below).

itation to one participant (often the letter-bearer) in the face of another. Now, if a messenger was invested with authority on the basis of a birchbark letter, it must follow that a written message was deemed more trustworthy (or at least more authoritative) than a person who just pronounced a spoken message.

This interpretation seems to have been based to a large extent on Bulanin's (1997) theory about the sacred status of the written word, which lends it authority in the face of the letter's recipient. Interestingly, several researchers of Western European medieval literacy take a diametrically opposite point of view, viz. that the messenger was necessary to accredit the written message (rather than vice versa) due to the absence of trust in the written word as such. Both theories will be reviewed in chapter 4, when discussing the notion of orality in more detail.

2.6 Subsequent Research

Gippius (2004, 229) concludes his article with a plea for a more extensive investigation of the higher levels of textual organization and the communicative peculiarities surrounding the birchbark letters. And indeed, his innovative approach to the birchbark corpus has sparked interest to further investigate the topic of communicative heterogeneity, as well as to apply a pragmatic approach to several more birchbark letters. This was done in recent years, primarily by Schaeken and Gippius.[11] The main output of their investigations shows that Gippius's (2004) approach has been fruitful beyond the initial article, and that following up on his findings, as will be done in the rest of this study, is not just a shot in the dark. For this reason, some of the subsequent research will now be briefly reviewed.

Schaeken (2011a) provides a new interpretation for birchbark letter N497:

(16) Pokolono o Gavrili o Poseni ko zati moemou ko Gorigori ži koumou i ko sestori moei ko Ouliti. Čo bi este poixali vo gorodo ko radosti moei, a našego solova ne ostavili. Da Bogo vamo radoste.
Mi vašego solova voxi ne osotavimo.

11 I refer to a series of articles (Schaeken 2011a, 2011b, 2014, Gippius & Schaeken 2011, Collins 2011) that deal with certain aspects of the pragmatics and communicative structure of various individual birchbark texts, building on the insights of Gippius (2004), and consolidating his conclusions. Two of these articles (Schaeken 2011a, 2014) will be reviewed below.

> 'Greetings from Gavrila Postnja to my brother-in-law Grigorij, [my] *kum*, and to my sister Ulita. May you come to the city, to my happiness, and not depart from our request. May God give you happiness.
> We will all not depart from your request.'[12]
>
> N497 / 1340–1360 / DND, 563 / translation SCHAEKEN 2011a, 3

Schaeken (2011a, 4) notes some oddities about this letter: these serve as a starting point for his investigation. Firstly, it is a bit strange that Gavrila Postnja invites Grigorij and Ulita to come over, and then promises to respond to an earlier invitation from their side. Secondly, the letter was excavated in Novgorod, although Gavrila Postnja invited Grigorij and Ulita to come to the city (i.e. Novgorod), so that the letter should have been sent off from Novgorod.

Schaeken's (2011a, 5) alternative interpretation is that N497 is a communicatively heterogeneous letter, but in a somewhat different way than are Gippius's (2004) examples. The letter's final phrase (*Mi vašego solova voxi ne osotavimo* 'We will all not depart from your request') is Grigorij and Ulita's reply to the above invitation. Thus, the invitation and the reply to it are written on the same piece of birchbark; but the thing is that they are written in the same hand. How can this be explained? In this respect, Schaeken stresses the central role of the messenger, who functioned as the scribe for the authors of both parts of the letter. This means that Gavrila Postnja dictated his message to a scribe, who wrote it down, and with whom the letter was sent away. Grigorij and Ulita, in turn, instructed the same scribe (messenger) to write the reply, whereupon the latter brought the letter back to Gavrila Postnja. This communicative setting is in full accord with Gippius's (2004) observations about the role of the messenger.

The scenario described above has several important implications as to the role and status of the written word. If there was a face-to-face encounter between the messenger and the addressees anyway, why write a letter at all? Schaeken (2011a, 8–9) devotes a paragraph to this question and draws the conclusion that

> written communication on birchbark, at least in the later period, could serve more than utilitarian purposes in Novgorod society. [...] Taking into account N497, writing on birchbark seemed to be integrated in society to the extent of communicating matters of courtesy and politeness.

12 "A *kum* is a relative by baptism of one's child" (Schaeken 2011a: 3; cf. SRJa XI–XVII 8: 116).

Schaeken (2014) continues his investigations in the same vein. He shows "a perfect typological parallel" (2014, 156) for the invitation with reply (N497). This concerns a Greek papyrus from Roman Egypt (2nd century A.D.), where the first part of the document is written by Heras to "Taphes my sister", with the reply ("To Heras my sister") underneath it, written in the same hand. The conclusion to be drawn is that the scribe and the messenger are the same person.

Schaeken (2014) also provides a more precise interpretation for N771 and Zv.2 in the light of communicative heterogeneity. As before, the messenger serves as the main explanatory mechanism here, too. In N771, the second part of the letter is an instruction to the messenger.[13] In Zv.2, the messenger is the author of the second part of the letter (from *Oli nь vodasi* 'If you don't give [it]'):

(17) + Ot Gověnovoe : ko Něžьnьcju. Dae 6 desjato kouno lodienouju. Povědalo Gověno ida na soudo : a poръ psl̄ъ. : A dae Loucě. Oli nь vodasi, to ja u konjazja poema otroko prižь priedju; a vo bole ti vonidь. :

'From Goven's [widow] to Neženec. Give 60 boat-*kunas* (i.e. 60 *kunas* for the boat). Goven said [this], going to Judgment, and the priest wrote [it] down. And give [it] to Luka. If you don't give [it], then I will come, taking an official (constable) from the prince with me; and it will go into more [expense] for you.'

Zv.2 / 1120–1140 / DND, 346 / translation SCHAEKEN 2014, 162–163

Schaeken (2014, 163) arrives at this conclusion by analyzing *poema* 'taking' as a *masculine* form of the present active participle. This is odd, given that Goven's widow is obviously feminine. The sentence in question must, therefore, according to Schaeken, have been authored by the messenger (Luka, who is also the scribe). Interestingly, if Schaeken's alternative interpretation is valid,[14] it can be observed at this point that in a communicative sense Zv.2 is a variation on St.R.15. Both include an order to pay and a threat in case the money is not paid, but in Zv.2 the threat is not phrased in the form of a mandate (as it is

13 For further details about this letter, the reader is referred to the original article (Schaeken 2014: 158–162).

14 Schaeken (2014: 164–165) himself puts in a caveat against his own interpretation, taking into account the possibility that the participle might be neutral as to gender; it "might actually be the earliest unambiguous attestation on birchbark of loss of agreement." Chances are that we may never be entirely sure.

in St.R.15). Thus, although the communicative constellation is different, it still consists of three parties involved, and it is still one of hidden heterogeneity.

What we have seen in Schaeken (2011a, 2014) is a successful further pursuit of the approach that was initiated by Gippius (2004). This resulted in the discovery of a new type of communicative heterogeneity.

2.7 Discussion

The abovementioned research marks the start of a new research area in berestology. The most tangible result is that more accurate interpretations of individual texts have been given, thanks to the discovery of (hidden) communicative heterogeneity. On a more general note, a first account of the oral aspects of communication on birchbark has been formulated. One central theme that can be subsumed under this heading of orality is the role of the messenger; all of the above studies refer to the messenger in one way or another. But in passing, we have already seen several kinds of orality so far, connected with dictation, reading out aloud, the role of the messenger, the role of the broader context, etc. In addition, some attention has been devoted to the fact that writing served not just utilitarian, but also ceremonial purposes. These are features that will, of course, be elaborated on in the remainder of this study. The findings regarding individual texts will have to be generalized.

Now, in what way have the above publications by Schaeken (2011a, 2014) added insights to Gippius's (2004) initial investigation? Crucially, the abovementioned investigations all revolve around individual documents that are more or less problematic to interpret; a communicatively heterogeneous reading is then presented as the solution to the interpretative problems. It is in this vein that the subsequent articles resume the thread of Gippius (2004). This pragmatic approach results in improved readings of these individual texts, which is indeed a great gain to the field of berestology. What is lacking up to the present day, however, is a general overview connecting the insights gained from these individual studies. It is at this point that the present study is meant to continue the quest.

Gippius's (2004) argumentation may at first sight seem anything but convincing to someone who is less familiar with the birchbark letters. It runs counter to all our present-day intuitions about the use of written language. Some more attention will, therefore, be devoted to underlining the validity of his line of analysis, while making use of theoretical terms. This study is not meant to replicate the abovementioned approach by applying it to more documents. Neither is it meant to provide an exhaustive overview of all communica-

tively heterogeneous birchbark letters. It is intended to furnish a deepening and broadening of the new approach taken by Gippius. This will inevitably involve an encounter with issues of orality. A more precise formulation of the research question will be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Research Question

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the main research question will be formulated in the light of the issues encountered in chapter 2. As was announced in the Preface, the research will be conducted in the form of four case studies. A justification of the selection of these case studies will also be presented in this chapter (§ 3.3).

3.2 Research Question

Now that we have discussed several examples of communicatively heterogeneous texts (§§ 2.2–2.3), and are tuned in to an explanation in the realm of an oral component (§ 2.4), especially the role of the messenger, we can take the subject up for a more thorough investigation. The studies mentioned in the previous chapter have resulted in substantially new findings. They are explorations of a vast innovative area that had not been studied before, at least as far as the birchbark letters are concerned. Inevitably, these studies also lead on to a number of questions. It is against this background that we can present our **research question** in some more detail:

> Keeping in mind that (hidden) communicative heterogeneity has been identified as one manifestation of an oral component in the communicative process, it is to be expected that there are more such manifestations in the birchbark texts. In what ways does this oral component manifest itself in linguistic features, and how can these features be accounted for in terms of the transition from orality to literacy?

Presenting an answer to this question is the main objective of the present study. The question itself may need some more detailed specification.

First of all, the kind of elements that will be searched for can be described as linguistic features. These are elements that occur throughout the corpus as a whole, and can thus be regarded on a higher level than that of individual texts. These linguistic elements will be treated in the individual case studies.

Secondly, a research method will have to be specified (which will be identified as "pragmaphilology" in chapter 4). How can these oral elements be found?

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They should be searched for in a more generalized way than has been done heretofore. Our pragmaphilological approach will provide a more solid underpinning to the initial discoveries made by Gippius (2004), as it will be concerned not with individual letters on a problem-and-solution basis, but rather with a systematic investigation of linguistic parameters that are to be found throughout the whole of the corpus. In so doing, we shall take a next step towards providing an inventory of oral features that are characteristic of the corpus.

In short, the investigations mentioned earlier in chapter 2 form the background against which the present study should be viewed. It is meant to build on the abovementioned investigations, but also to provide a follow-up with a well-defined methodology. Gippius's (2004) argumentation and the subsequent studies may all come across as quite surprising. But if the theme is viewed from the right perspective, it is not surprising at all. All instances of communicative heterogeneity are part of a broader phenomenon. One of the aims of this study is to position the previous findings within this broader field.

3.3 The Choice of Case Studies

As was said before, the research will be implemented by way of case studies; specific linguistic features have been selected for investigation, viz.:

I. Imperative subjects
II. Speech reporting strategies
III. Epistolary past tense
IV. Assertive declarations

Below, several reasons will be given to justify the choice of linguistic parameters for the case studies. Inevitably, the selection of case studies implies a "top-down" approach (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013, 43), which suggests that certain parameters are selected *a priori*, while others are left out. This may seem a biased approach, only good for underlining the importance of certain preestablished notions. Nevertheless, the case studies have been selected deliberately, in view of consolidating earlier observations about individual letters. Earlier research (some of which was discussed in the previous chapter) served as the basis for the selection of linguistic features. In order to explain why these specific case studies have been selected, we inevitably have to refer forward to some examples from the case studies, as will be done in the following subsections.

3.3.1 *Imperative Subjects*

The first case study (about imperative subjects, chapter 5) flows forth from Gippius's (2004) central theme of communicative heterogeneity. If letters can consist of several parts, each with its own addressee, then it is relevant to investigate the connection with imperative subjects (especially second-person pronouns). To what extent do imperative subjects serve as a linguistic signal for the category of communicative heterogeneity, i.e. to explicitly indicate a switch of reference from one addressee to the next? The answer to this question will provide a more theoretical basis for Gippius's (2004) statements. The hypothesis is that the second-person pronoun *ty* 'you' (possibly in combination with a name in the vocative case) is the most prototypical way of indicating a switch of addressee. We have seen an example already, viz. *a ty, Nestere* 'and you, Nester' (N358, see example (6) in chapter 2), where we have an imperative subject plus a vocative to signal the switch of addressee.

3.3.2 *Speech Reporting Strategies*

The second case study (chapter 6) deals with speech reporting strategies. The question to be raised is how the various speech reporting strategies are distributed throughout the corpus, and to what extent this distribution can be analysed as a reflection of orality and literacy. In order to justify the choice of this topic, we have to refer to the notion of deixis, which is a crucial element within pragmatics. Collins (2001) provides an in-depth analysis of speech reporting strategies in trial transcripts and other legal documents from late medieval Russia. He argues that trial records were largely oral in nature. Furthermore, he connects the difference between direct and indirect reported speech to the transparency of deictic expressions. In other words, the context determines whether a phrase is interpreted as direct or indirect speech: there are no syntactic criteria. It is exactly because of this context-dependence that the topic of speech reporting can be connected to orality. The hypothesis is that direct speech is more context-dependent and, therefore, more oral in nature. Consequently, if we can detect a certain diachronic tendency in the use of direct speech, this may serve as one indicator of the development of the context-dependence of the birchbark letters. This will all be explained in greater detail in the case study itself. For this case study, no formal linguistic feature is available. The selection of relevant data follows instead from a careful reading of each letter as a whole.

3.3.3 *Epistolary Past Tense*

The third case study (about the epistolary past tense, chapter 7) arose from the study of an individual document, where the past (perfect) tense is used

in an instance where we would expect the use of the present tense: *Poslasmь k tobě šestь bocekъ vina* 'I have sent to you six barrels of wine.' It follows from the context that the barrels of wine were sent together with the letter. So why is the past tense used? This is a phenomenon which in itself is well-known from a variety of (mainly) ancient languages. The usual explanation is that the author adapts his formulation to the addressee's temporal perspective. The fact that this phenomenon occurs mainly in ancient, but not in modern languages, led to the hypothesis that the use of the past tense may have something to do with an oral residue in early stages of a literary culture. This hypothesis justified a corpus-wide investigation of the phenomenon, while asking the question whether the same "epistolary" interpretation will hold for Old Russian, and to what extent the use of the past tense in these instances can be accounted for in terms of the development from orality to literacy. Our case study provides an alternative analysis for this so-called epistolary past tense, which connects it to orality.

3.3.4 *Assertive Declarations*

The fourth case study (chapter 8) deals with the use of the past tense in performatives (or performative-like expressions) and is in a certain sense a continuation of the third case study, which contains examples of past tense usage in contexts where we would use the present tense nowadays. The analysis of these instances led to further questions relating to the use of the past tense in performative (or performative-like) expressions. This case study is mainly concerned with a specific type of performatives (assertive declarations). The question to be answered is: Should the reason for the use of the past tense in these instances be sought in the area of orality and literacy? It can be hypothesized that the use of the past tense in these instances has to do with a different role of the written word than is customary in our modern use of writing. This case study seeks to explain the distribution of present and past (perfect and aorist) tense forms in terms of primary orality and secondary literacy, i.e. the spoken word is primary and the written word only a secondary record of the spoken utterance, and that the one has no real force and validity without the other. Thus, speaking and writing function in close interdependence.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

The previous research described in chapter 2 has resulted in fruitful and innovative interpretations of individual birchbark texts. Some of these findings can even be described as spectacular. Nevertheless, we want to proceed one step

further. The aims of the present study are not restricted to finding new interpretations for individual texts. This study is rather intended to strengthen the argumentation that revolves around orality. If orality is used as an explanatory tool for the occurrence of hidden communicative heterogeneity and similar phenomena, we should be able to view orality throughout the corpus, not just as an explanation for unusual phenomena, but also as a more pervasive characteristic of communication on birchbark. This should be underpinned theoretically. A presentation of the theoretical framework for this study will be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Theory and Methodology: Pragmaphilology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is meant to present the theoretical and methodological prerequisites for our investigation. As was pointed out in chapter 1, the research for this study involves the use of a unique historical corpus. The major aim of this study is to shed more light on the role and degree of orality, and how this can be elicited from the corpus. I announced to take a pragmatic approach. At this point, some theoretical notions need to be introduced and explained. It should be said at the outset that, due to the unicity of the corpus, the theoretical lines cannot always be applied in their full scope. This is the second reason for the existence of this chapter, viz. to provide a preliminary assessment of the applicability of the theories, and what methods are needed to adapt them to this specific corpus. We shall have to deal with the question how these theoretical notions can be applied and made relevant with respect to the research question and case studies.

The particulars of this approach will be explained step by step in the course of this chapter. They will be narrowed down consecutively in the following way: A philological approach is employed, more specifically the branch of linguistic philology (§ 4.2), looked at from a pragmatic perspective (§ 4.3), which leads us to identify our approach as pragmaphilology (§ 4.4). Our main focus point within pragmaphilology is orality, which is defined theoretically in § 4.5. To maximally generalize the study, a corpus linguistics method is used as much as is feasible for this corpus (§ 4.6). In order to make the methodological principles somewhat more tangible, their application will be illustrated briefly in § 4.7, anticipating one of the case studies.

4.2 Philology

Because we are confronted with historical texts, a philological approach is indispensable; it is the only way of gaining access to old texts. Philology is somewhat elusive to an unequivocal definition, but it can be broadly defined as an instrument for the disclosure of historical texts (cf. Fischer 2004, 132). It studies the notation, transmission and reception of texts in a variety of dimensions (cf. Gerritsen 2003, 27; cf. Schaeken 2004, 4). There are several

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subdivisions of philological labour, such as palaeography, linguistic analysis, study of the historical context. The main objective is to obtain a felicitous interpretation of a specific text. A primary characteristic of philology is the central role of the sources (texts) themselves.

Some aspects of philology, such as palaeography, play only a minor role in the present study: this type of research has been conducted quite exhaustively for the birchbark letters. A very suitable edition (DND) is available; therefore, the texts do not need to be deciphered in the most basic sense.

The specific branch of philology that we are concerned with in this study is that of linguistic philology. The linguistic data can only be interpreted in the light of the historical context, and, conversely, the linguistic data can only be extracted properly by a meticulous study of the surface linguistic forms that appear in the texts. In that sense, linguistic analysis is one element of philology, where the latter is an overarching term. Linguistic analysis provides a crucial building block for the disclosure of the birchbark texts. For present purposes, I take a linguistic analysis to denote simply the investigation of linguistic features in a text.

We do not want to just study linguistic features for the sake of reconstructing the grammatical peculiarities of Old Novgorodian. In order to answer the research question, we must be concerned with language *use*. So what we need is linguistics more specifically realized as pragmatics (which is taken as a subfield of linguistics). Thus, we look at linguistic features from a pragmatic perspective. Our linguistic analysis aims at eliciting and analysing pragmatically relevant linguistic elements.

4.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as a subdiscipline of linguistics, is a broad field of study which has gained a widespread application. Taken in its broadest definition, it touches on the interaction between speakers and hearers. On the one hand, there is grammar, and on the other hand, each utterance, which consists of grammatical structures, has a certain function within a certain context. The relationship between the two is studied in pragmatics, which "can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations" (Leech 1983, x). Most of the notions that will be appealed to in the case studies will concern traditional (Anglo-American) pragmatic topics, such as deixis, reference, and speech acts. These are sufficiently well-known to go without introduction. Nevertheless, some general issues about pragmatics need to be made explicit before we set out.

Most importantly, we have to do with historical texts. This means that we need to turn to the field of historical pragmatics. Much work has been conducted in this field over the past few years; it is by no means my intention to go over all these issues in detail. A more general observation I want to make is that the field of historical pragmatics seems to be far less theoretically oriented than earlier studies in synchronic pragmatics. It turns out that studies in historical pragmatics rarely appeal to "hard-core" theoretical-pragmatic notions, such as presuppositions, entailment, implicatures, etc. Most studies rather concentrate on a slightly *ad hoc* analysis of the more "surface" elements in a text corpus. This is something to be borne in mind when classifying historical pragmatics as part of the broader field of pragmatics proper.

Historical pragmatics can be subdivided into two branches, viz. pragmaphilology and diachronic pragmatics (Jacobs & Jucker 1995). Since the diachronic component in our investigations is only minor, the latter branch is not too relevant for our purposes, although some case studies allow for a first impression of a diachronic development throughout the more than four hundred years of birchbark literacy. Pragmaphilology will be discussed in the next subsection.

4.4 Pragmaphilology

As we have seen, we use philology, within philology we narrow down to linguistic philology, within linguistics we focus on pragmatics; now, the combination of these terms leads us to pragmaphilology.

As was mentioned in chapter 2, Gippius's (2004) article can be considered a starting point for a pragmatic approach to the birchbark letters; it served as the basis for a series of subsequent articles by Gippius and Schaeken, and it is also foundational for the present study. In the article itself, Gippius does not really use any theoretical terms to describe his approach. Schaeken (2011a) and Collins (2011) are the first to introduce the term "pragmaphilology" into the field of berestology; they look back onto the work of Gippius (2004) as a "showcase of pragmaphilology" (Schaeken 2011a, 2), and continue their own investigations in the same vein.

Now, what exactly does this pragmaphilological approach entail? The term "pragmaphilology" was first introduced by Jacobs & Jucker (1995) as a subbranch of historical pragmatics. The basic definition they provide runs as follows: "Pragmaphilology [...] describes the contextual aspects of historical texts, including the addressers and addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text reception, and the goal(s) of the text" (Jacobs & Jucker 1995, 11). This is the initial definition of

pragmaphilology, and it seems a fairly wide-ranging one. The quote is often reproduced, and this is how pragmaphilology is usually introduced. This also seems to be the way Schaeken (2011a) conceived of it when he introduced the term into the field of berestology. The term "pragmaphilology" can be applied to Gippius (2004), as well as the subsequent research, modelled after Gippius (2004), some of which was discussed in chapter 2. Most, if not all, of these pragmaphilological studies about birchbark letters concern communicative heterogeneity in some form or other.[1]

Like most approaches, the pragmaphilological approach has inevitably attracted some criticism, too. "It is true that studies that might be labelled pragmaphilology also consider local contexts, but they do so in a more ad hoc way and rarely provide conceptual or theoretical underpinnings (typically drawn from sociology) for local contexts" (Archer & Culpeper 2009, 287–288).

Similar concerns about the reliability of interpretation procedures in "historical pragmatics" (their terminology) are voiced by Taavitsainen & Fitzmaurice (2007). These can, no doubt, be extended to Gippius (2004) and subsequent research. I recognize that the *ad hoc* kind of pragmaphilology where individual texts are considered on a "problem-and-solution" basis can indeed result in somewhat subjective interpretations. This situation can be remedied by systematically investigating the birchbark corpus as a whole, focusing on specific linguistic parameters.

So pragmaphilology has attracted some criticism. Furthermore, the term has not been too widely adopted (cf. Kopaczyk 2012). Nevertheless, the earlier successful application of this approach to the birchbark letters (as demonstrated in chapter 2) warrants its further implementation, although in a somewhat broadened form. Pragmaphilology may indeed be somewhat impressionistic, and is usually concerned with individual documents. Though it has proved its worth, it may have to be supplemented by methods of corpus linguistics. We shall see in § 4.6 to what extent corpus linguistic methods are applicable to the birchbark corpus.

4.5 Orality

But first we need to concentrate on orality, which forms the heart of the present study. It can be described as a special focus point of pragmaphilology. As we saw in chapter 2, Gippius (2004) refers to an oral component in birchbark

1 Gippius (2004), Schaeken (2011a, 2011b, 2014), Gippius & Schaeken (2011), Collins (2011).

communication. But what is orality? I am certainly not the first one to ask this question. What has been said about orality (in the Middle Ages or more in general), and what can we do with it? We need a solid definition of orality, and a perspective from which we can view the case studies.

Of course, the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about orality is the dichotomy between the spoken and the written medium. This is a very basic and easy to understand distinction: you either speak or write. Now, when studying written materials from the past, like we do, it may not be immediately obvious in what way the spoken medium can be involved there. The only thing we have is a corpus of written texts, which means that we do not have access to spoken Old Russian. So if we want to detect any oral element in birchbark communication, it will necessarily be "hidden" in the written medium. But how can an oral component end up in a written text?

4.5.1 *The Oral Residue*

Before the advent of Christianity in Rus' in the late 10th century, Novgorod was an oral society. Writing did not play a role in society; all transactions were performed orally. As a result of the Christianization, the technology of writing came to be used in Novgorod, first in the church, and afterwards also in broader layers of society. In this way, the new technology spread throughout more and more domains of society: it was used in more and more situations of everyday life (Gippius 2012). Consequently, more and more transactions that used to be conducted orally were now complemented by writing. This means that the sphere of use of writing broadened, at the expense of oral communication.

Such a transition from oral to written communication often has consequences for the way in which written messages are phrased. These messages may contain traces of the old, oral way of communication. This is what Ong (1982/2002) calls an "oral residue" in writing. Ong does not specify in what ways his oral residue can have repercussions on the linguistic content and structure of a text. In fact, he does not investigate any texts at all. He is rather interested in reasoning about issues in literary and psychological theory. Nonetheless, the notion of oral residue presupposes an approach to features of orality that are embedded in the written medium. We shall now see in what way they are embedded, and how the oral features relate to the written medium.

4.5.2 *Medium and Conception*

Building on an initial proposal by Söll (1980), Koch & Oesterreicher (1985) distinguish between the *medium* and *conception*. The spoken and written medium entails a dichotomy: an utterance is realised either in the phonic or in the graphic code. Obviously, the birchbark letters have only come down to us in

TABLE 3 *Communicative conditions*[2]

Immediacy	**Distance**
dialogue	monologue
familiarity of participants	unfamiliarity of participants
face-to-face interaction	spatiotemporal division
situational involvement	situational detachment

the written medium. In the medial sense, therefore, it is beyond contention that they belong to the written language. However, the communicative conception is different from the medium. The conception is a continuum with an oral and literate pole. Any text can be positioned anywhere between the poles on this continuum.

Now, what the oral and literate poles represent can be described as follows. The position of an utterance or text on the pole is expressed by communicative conditions (*Kommunikationsbedingungen*) and verbalization strategies (*Versprachlichungsstrategien*). Some of these are listed in Tables 3 and 4. The sum of the characteristics of the oral and literate conception are termed "language of immediacy" (*Sprache der Nähe*) and "language of distance" (*Sprache der Distanz*), respectively. It follows that each spoken or written text can have features of immediacy (*Nähe*) or distance (*Distanz*). The most prototypical combinations are spoken + immediacy and written + distance.

The communicative conditions describe the circumstances in which the communicative act takes place. The verbalization strategies describe characteristics of the spoken utterance or written text itself. Not all of these communicative conditions and verbalization strategies are relevant to the birchbark letters that will be encountered in the case studies in Chs. 5–8. Just to illustrate some of the communicative conditions, let us return to one of the birchbark letters that we reviewed already. As an example of how Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) terms will be applied to some of the data from the case studies, we can take birchbark letter St.R.15:

2 Koch & Oesterreicher (1985: 23) enumerate some more communicative conditions, but I mention only those that will actually be relevant to the case studies. I have tried to provide appropriate English translations for the German terms that are used in their article.

TABLE 4 *Verbalization strategies*

Immediacy	**Distance**
process	materialization
temporariness	finality
lesser:	***greater:***
informational density	informational density
compactness	compactness
integration	integration
complexity	complexity
elaboration	elaboration
planning	planning

(18) Ot Petra kъ Vasilevi. Vъdai 6 kounъ i grivьnou Vyšjatě. Ali ti ne dastь a pristavi na nь otrokъ.

'From Petr to Vasil'. Give 6 *kunas* and a *grivna* to Vyšata. If he doesn't give [them], then send a court official after him.'

St.R.15 / 1140–1160 / DND, 328

Let us go along the line of communicative conditions from Table 3 that can be applied to this letter, bearing in mind the interpretation proposed by Gippius (2004):

– *Dialogue*: Petr addresses two persons consecutively. This is more typical for dialogue than for monologue.
– *Familiarity of participants*: Only those who are involved in the transaction can easily infer the meaning of the text.
– *Face-to-face interaction*: As Gippius (2004) indicates, the communicative act is envisaged as though all three participants were standing together.
– *Situational involvement*: The text can only be understood in the specific situation for which it is intended, i.e. if it is presented and read out aloud by the right person.

These are some communicative conditions that belong to the language of immediacy, which Koch & Oesterreicher consider to be the true parameter of orality (i.e. the conception determines whether a text is more oral or more literate, not the question whether it is phrased in the spoken or written medium).

Thus, the theory of Koch & Oesterreicher (1985) can be used to provide terminology to describe features of orality in birchbark letters in a more structured manner.

The case studies will show that some of the verbalization strategies in Table 4 are somewhat out of place as far as the birchbark letters are concerned. For instance, compactness is certainly a characteristic of this particular birchbark letter (St.R.15, as well as of the birchbark corpus in general), which Koch & Oesterreicher (1985, 23) consider a feature of the language of distance. But the reason why this letter (St.R.15) is so compact is exactly because of the oral component. The messenger could elaborate on the letter, and the context would make clear what may seem obscure to us. So in this case, compactness (which is a feature of distance) is possible due to the oral component (proximity).

One of the problems is that Koch & Oesterreicher (1985) do not sufficiently specify the verbalization strategies. They just take for granted that the readers will go by the common sense meaning of the terms. It has to be acknowledged, therefore, that this approach is not a fully-fledged theory; it is rather an initial impetus, a description of an approach to be developed. As such, it is innovative and the observations made are most valid and helpful.

However, it remains unclear from the theory in what way these indicators materialize linguistically. In other words, Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) approach identifies characteristics of immediacy and distance in communication, but these characteristics have not yet been linked to the linguistic surface of texts. The verbalization strategies are too general; they need to be connected to specific linguistic features. Our case studies will be a first attempt at this, i.e. as far as the birchbark letters are concerned.

Ágel & Hennig (2006, 13) also criticize several of Koch & Oesterreicher's verbalization strategies and decry the vague differentiation between communicative conditions and verbalization strategies (ibid., 14). In addition, they state that it is hardly possible to position specific texts on the immediacy-distance continuum in a reliable way, due to the absence of tangible criteria (ibid.). A generalized model can serve as a starting point, but is not sufficient. I would contend that we need to take into account language-specific linguistic features and the way in which they operate in specific texts. Ágel & Hennig's own method for establishing the degree of immediacy/distance cannot serve us here, either; it is more suitable for longer, narrative texts. A token-frequency analysis plays a considerable role in their method, which is not feasible in the case of our limited corpus (see § 4.6).

Two important terms remain to be introduced in relation to Koch & Oesterreicher's work, viz. *Verschriftung* and *Verschriftlichung*. These terms are defined and discussed by Oesterreicher (1993), as being related to the distinction be-

tween medium and conception. It is hard to find suitable English equivalents; both terms might be described as "a movement towards writing or literacy", so the German terms will be retained here. *Verschriftung* is used to describe a mere switch from the spoken to the written medium, i.e. without any conceptional consequences (a clear case of *Verschriftung* can be seen in St.R.15, where the oral characteristics of a face-to-face encounter are retained in writing). *Verschriftlichung* has a much wider scope; it involves not only a switch to the written medium, but the switch to the written medium also has consequences for the position of texts on the immediacy-distance continuum (i.e. a language of distance develops).

Looking back on Koch & Oesterreicher's theory, we can certainly use their notion of "language of immediacy" as the primary indicator of orality, as distinct from the spoken or written medium. But more remains to be said; we can look at orality from yet another angle, which will put Koch & Oesterreicher's classification in a slightly broader perspective.

4.5.3 *Types of Orality*

There are several ways in which a text can be related to the notion of orality. According to Culpeper & Kytö (2010, 17), there are three ways in which a text can be connected to speech. A text can be *speech-like*, *speech-based* or *speech-purposed*. Speech-like can be explained in terms of Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) notion of immediacy, as discussed above: a text contains features of "conceptional" (as opposed to "medial") orality. Speech-based means that the text is based on an oral speech event (such as trial proceedings). Speech-purposed means that a text is "designed to be articulated orally" (Culpeper & Kytö 2010, 17), in other words, that it is meant to be read out aloud (like plays).

Culpeper & Kytö (2010) envisage the terms as representing three categories of genres. As we shall see when discussing the results from the case studies (chapter 9), all three elements can be present simultaneously in birchbark letters, and they are often interdependent. More specifically, speech-like properties can often be explained by the speech-based and speech-purposed nature of a text. In other words, speech-like features of immediacy are often the result of dictation (speech-based) and the fact that a letter is meant to be read out aloud in front of the addressee (speech-purposed). This line of reasoning will be followed further in the discussion of the results (chapter 9). Of course it should be realised that this usage stretches the categories farther than Culpeper & Kytö (2010) have intended them. So I employ Culpeper & Kytö's terms, although I use them in a slightly different way.

Culpeper & Kytö (2010, 17) do acknowledge that their categories can overlap, but, curiously, they exclude this possibility for personal letters: "Personal

correspondence is an example of a genre that does not overlap with the other categories: it is neither based on nor designed to be like speech." This shows that the character of a genre such as personal correspondence is heavily dependent on the communicative practices of writing of the culture in which it is embedded. After all, personal correspondence on birchbark is often closely linked to dictation and reading out aloud, and, therefore, speech-based and speech-purposed, even if the latter may be wholly unconscious (in other words, even if the author of a letter did not make conscious efforts to adapt the contents of the letter to its spoken performance in front of the addressee, the letter can nevertheless contain elements that are speech-purposed).

4.5.4 *Trust in Writing*

An important notion that is connected to orality is "trust in writing", or rather, in more theoretical terms, the extent to which a written text can have a context-independent function, without the necessity for a messenger to lend credibility to a written message. As was mentioned already in chapter 2, there are two diametrically opposite points of view regarding trust in writing in the Middle Ages. Gippius (2004) bases his interpretations on the theory put forward by Bulanin (1997), who views the authority of the birchbark letters as a remnant of the origin of the written word in religious writing (as far as medieval Russia is concerned, of course). For him, the symbolic nature of the birchbark letters is primary, whereas the contents merely play a secondary role. The symbolic authority of the written word lends credibility to the spoken message by which the messenger enlarges on the letter. Thus, because of its religious connotations, writing acquired a kind of "magical" status which was subsequently exploited for affairs in everyday life.

Some researchers of Western European medieval literacy (most notably Clanchy 2012, but also Köhn 1998 and others) start from the opposite end; they view the written word as a secondary by-product of the spoken message, which remains primary. There has to be a person who testifies orally to the truth of the written message, or else the document is not trustworthy and cannot fulfil any function by itself, i.e. independently from an oral component.

Can these contradictory viewpoints, as expressed by Bulanin (1997) on the one hand, and Clanchy (2012) on the other, be reconciled, and what can the birchbark letters tell us about these apparently diverging views? Bulanin's theory is quite extreme and far-fetched, but Gippius (2004) also speaks about a letter as a mandate. In fact, all authors who raise the matter in connection with the birchbark documents seem to take the same stance: they assume a certain amount of trust in writing which lends authority to the documents.

What should be concluded on the basis of all this? Was writing culture in medieval Novgorod so very different from that in Western Europe? Alternatively, Clanchy, Köhn and others may have been totally wrong. But obviously, although they write about roughly the same period as the birchbark era, their field of study concerns Western Europe, not Russia. In addition, the text types with which they are concerned are generally more of a chancery-type literacy, whereas our birchbark letters are generally more casual and ephemeral. But that is strange: we would rather expect the opposite conclusions to be drawn, i.e. more trust in the official, "chancery-type" parchment documents, and less trust in the short-lived and casual birchbark letters.

In any case, it has become clear that if we investigate matters of orality in the birchbark corpus, we cannot leave out the problematic notion of trust in writing. We must view the case studies also against the background of this issue. A further evaluation will follow in our final discussion of the case studies (chapter 9).

4.6 Use of the Corpus

So within a pragmaphilological approach we focus on matters of orality. How is this done practically in the case of the birchbark corpus? The general direction that can be noticed in the field of historical pragmatics over the past ten years is a movement towards a greater emphasis on statistics, larger-scale corpora, and a concern to verify and objectify findings. As I said before, there has been some severe criticism of the pragmaphilological method in this respect. Taavitsainen & Fitzmaurice (2007) propose a robust, data-driven (corpus-based) quantitative approach to historical pragmatics, with the intention to warrant a methodologically sound interpretation of individual documents. It sounds like a good idea to try and generalize the findings using a statistically robust method. However, such a heavy quantitative emphasis is hardly feasible when studying the birchbark letters, due to the restricted size of the corpus (cf. § 1.2). The usual theories and methods of corpus linguistics cannot be of much avail to us. The closest we can come to corpus linguistics is by investigating linguistic features throughout the corpus, without too many statistic pretentions. This is the road that has been taken in the present investigation.

The specific nature of the corpus has to be taken into account. What is so specific about it is, first of all, the brevity of the texts, and, connected to that, the vastly important role of context. This excludes a purely quantitative analysis. Each text has to be studied meticulously in its own right. Nevertheless, the quantitative component is not totally absent from our investigation, especially

in the case study about speech reporting. In any case, the drawback that the lesser use of the quantitative method may seem to imply should not be overstated. Corpus linguistics is often thought to be more "objective" and "exact" than the qualitative study of texts (cf. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013, 42), but in the case of certain subfields of historical pragmatics, "there is always a subjective element in the interpretations" (ibid.). The remedy is to use a combination of a qualitative analysis with as great a quantitative component as is possible for this corpus. The problem of small numbers does, therefore, not have to be insurmountable.

The relationship between this kind of mainly qualitative research and the rather quantitative-oriented approaches of the day is envisaged as follows. As was just mentioned, the nature of the corpus makes it impossible to conduct extensive quantitative research. That is the simplest reason for the minor role it plays in this study. On a more fundamental level, the quantitative approach can only select certain formal characteristics, such as perfect tense forms. Such a selection according to a formal criterion alone does not shed much light on any issue, however. The data need a qualitative interpretation, and it is only then that a meaningful selection can be made, i.e. certain functions are assigned to *a part of* the formal category (not all perfect tense forms are connected to orality in the same way, for instance; see § 4.7). It is impossible to connect specific linguistic features to the language of immediacy or distance without analysing how these features are used. It is here that the importance of a qualitative pragmatic approach shows itself.

In short, I do not want to ignore prevalent quantitative research strategies, but their dominance is simply not viable in this case. We would need a much larger corpus, and even then we would have to investigate each extracted token qualitatively.

Finally, a few words about the practical use of the corpus. The corpus that has been used is an electronic database of birchbark letters, compiled by several Russian scholars in 2006. This means that the findings of the subsequent seasons have not yet been incorporated into the database. Hence, the birchbark letters from N960 onwards had to be investigated manually from the preliminary editions published in the journal *Voprosy jazykoznanija* (which have recently been superseded by NGB XII, i.e. a new volume in the series of printed editions).[3] In the meantime, an updated version (up to N1015) has seen the light

3 Any alterations and additions compared to the preliminary edition have been taken into account in the final revision of the present study.

as part of the Russian National Corpus, which is publicly available online.[4] The database includes the option to search for parts of speech and linguistic features, such as verbal tense, verbal aspect, person, gender, number, as well as specific lexical items.

As was mentioned in chapter 1, the birchbark corpus as part of the Russian National Corpus contains 19,461 words (lexemes). This includes only those pieces of birchbark (885) which are of a reasonable length and in a reasonable state of preservation, as opposed to those fragments which have just a few characters or too many gaps to be of any use at all.

4.7 Illustration of the Pragmaphilological Approach: One Case Study

The previous sections were all, admittedly, fairly abstract from a methodological point of view. We shall now discuss three methodological components of our approach by looking ahead to one of the case studies, viz. the one about assertive declarations (chapter 8). Without entering into too many details, I shall give a step-by-step methodological overview of the procedure of research in this particular case study. These steps can by and large be generalized to the rest of the case studies, too. Three things need to be made clear in order to make a meaningful selection of relevant data and draw the proper conclusions from them. Data need to be (a) elicited, (b) selected and (c) analysed/interpreted. Not all these individual steps are necessarily clearly visible on the surface of the case studies. After all, the case studies are a report of the research process, rather than a step-by-step rendition of that process itself. This is why I call attention to the process at this point, before proceeding with the case studies.

The hypothesis that led to the case study about assertive declarations (i.e. one type of performative expressions, according to the theory of Searle; see chapter 8 for more details) is that in the birchbark corpus, certain past tense forms can be used in instances of a performative nature, for example:

(19) Ot Sьmьjuna. Sь ***vozjalo esmь*** u Xrarja zadnicju Šibьnьsьvu. A bolь nь nadobě nikomu.

'From Semjun. Hereby ***I have taken*** from Xrar' the inheritance of Šibenec. And for the rest nobody has any claims over it.'

N198 / 1260–1280 / DND, 492

4 http://ruscorpora.ru/search-birchbark.html.

The hypothesis is that a formal criterion (in this case, certain past tense forms) can in some way or other provide an insight into the degree of orality of the birchbark corpus.

The first step to verify the hypothesis is to find out all tokens of the formal criterion, in this case all past tense forms.[5] This is the purely corpus linguistics part, corresponding to step (a) above. However, the selection of relevant past tense forms is not merely a quantitative enterprise. After all, by far not every past tense form can be interpreted as a performative. The formal criterion of the past tense shows up in many different contexts and has several shades of meaning and a wide scope of usage. Therefore, the criteria cannot be described in a purely formal way. The specific context of each letter plays a role. It is here that the qualitative aspect of this study is more important than the purely quantitative aspect.

So how do I select those instances of the past tense that are performative? It is not my intention to provide a justification for each individual choice. Rather, the general reasoning process should be transparent, which should provide ample opportunity for anyone to verify my decisions. A description of the corpus has been given already in chapter 1 and in § 4.6; it is to be understood as the whole of the available birchbark corpus, which is generally accessible. The formal search criteria (linguistic features, such as second-person pronouns (chapter 5) and past tense forms (chapters 7 and 8)) have been laid out in chapter 3.

What remains to be explained is the selection criteria, corresponding to step (b) above. These are tightly interwoven with step (c), viz. pragmatic analysis and interpretation. In cases like this, philological transparency is attained not by providing exhaustive enumerations of individual instances, but by justifying the general interpretative principles and reviewing a few representative cases. This is done in each case study, but let me give one example at this point already, from the same case study as above:

(20) Jazo tobe, bratou svojemu, ***prikazale*** pro sebe tako: ourjadilo li sja so toboju ci li ne ourjadilosja, ti ty so Drociloju po somolove pravi. A jazo sja klaneju.

‘From Petr to Kuz’ma. I ***have instructed*** [i.e. hereby instruct] you, my brother, concerning ourselves as follows: whether he has made an ar-

5 In practice, this means perfect and aorist forms, as will become clear in the case study itself.

> rangement with you or has not made an arrangement, you execute [it] with Dročila according to the agreement. And I bow down.'
>
> N344 / 1300–1320 / DND, 526

The perfect tense form *prikazale* 'I have instructed' is most likely to be interpreted as "I hereby instruct", judging from the following instruction. This would give the utterance a performative function. It thus makes it eligible for the selection in step (b). All selected tokens are presented in a table, and thence they form the starting point for their further interpretation in the light of the main research question.

Thus, step (c) requires the selected data to be analysed and explained in terms of orality. This requires that not just a single example, but the whole of the selected examples be taken into account. For this particular case study, it is argued that the use of the past tense is not to be taken as a mere recording of a past event, but (in the light of orality) rather as looking back on a past oral transaction (for instance, a prior oral agreement that is now fixed in writing, or a previous act of dictation, the result of which is the letter). See chapter 8 for a more extensive discussion of the particular birchbark letter just mentioned (20) and the further analysis of all elicited examples.

What remains, then, is to describe the types of orality encountered in each case study. In this case, it is mainly speech-based orality that is concerned (i.e. the use of the past tense reflects the primacy of a previous spoken utterance). A general appraisal of the types of orality encountered in the case studies will be given in chapter 9. Further details will be explained in that chapter.

It is now time to turn to the case studies themselves.

CHAPTER 5

Case Study 1: Imperative Subjects

5.1 Introduction[1]

We noted in chapter 2 that the occurrence of hidden communicative heterogeneity has led to the hypothesis that the birchbark letters have a substantial element of orality and functioned in a hybrid (oral-written) form of communication. It was indicated that this hypothesis can be enlarged on by systematically investigating linguistic parameters and pragmatic structures, and more specifically, by conducting research on how grammatical phenomena can fulfil a pragmatic role. The first of these phenomena to be investigated is the category of imperative subjects. In § 2.3, anticipating this chapter, the personal pronoun and vocative were already identified as special techniques to compensate for a lack of contextual information as it is usually available in the (face-to-face) basic language setting (Clark 1996). It will be shown in this chapter that the occurrence or non-occurrence of imperative subjects can be connected to the notions of coherence and, ultimately, orality.

We have seen how the communicatively heterogeneous letters that were put forward in chapter 2 consist of various parts, each with its own referential perspective. One of the linguistic units which can make this perspective explicit is the second-person pronoun, functioning as an imperative subject. It will be useful to first examine the usage of imperative subjects in the birchbark corpus as a whole. This overview will provide us with a starting point for discussing in what way imperative subjects can be related to the communicatively heterogeneous letters *à la* Gippius (2004), and more generally, to the notions of coherence and orality.

The question to be answered in this case study, then, runs as follows: To what extent does the personal pronoun *ty* 'you-SG', when used as an imperative subject, play a role in signalling the switch of perspective between the different parts of the abovementioned communicatively heterogeneous letters? As the category of communicatively heterogeneous letters has been sufficiently introduced in chapter 2, we do not need to review it here again. So first of all, in § 5.2, the usage of imperative subjects in the birchbark corpus will be investi-

1 This chapter is based on Dekker (2014).

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gated. Next, the imperative subject will be analyzed in terms of cohesion and coherence (§ 5.3), and a connection with the notion of orality will be established (§ 5.4).

5.2 Imperative Subjects

In general, the imperative construction in Old Russian does not have a grammatical subject, as can be seen in (21):

(21) Poklonъ ot Panfil k Mar-- i ko popu. ***Kupite*** masleca drevjanogo da ***prišlite*** simъ.

'Greetings from Panfila to Mar-- and to the priest. ***Buy*** lamp oil and ***send*** it over here.'

N173 / 1400–1410 / DND, 656

There are, however, also instances which do show a grammatical subject; the precise conditions of occurrence will be set out below. It should initially be remarked, though, that the imperative subjects that occur predominantly in the birchbark corpus are the second-person pronouns singular and plural, viz. *ty* and *vy*. For clarity's sake, an example can be put forward at this point:

(22) + Ot Petra k[ъ] Mareně. Ci ti pъc[ь]ne knjazь kupьcě nadělivati aci ti prisъle kъ tъbě, a ***ty*** emu mъlъvi [...]

'From Petr to Marena. If the prince starts providing for the merchants, and sends to you, then ***you*** say to him: [...].'

N794 / 1160–1180 / DND, 320

Before proceeding to our main topic, a few more general remarks about the imperative subject will be helpful in order to form an overall picture. First of all, the sequence pronoun + imperative, as in (22), is predominant, as opposed to the opposite sequence imperative + pronoun, which is attested only once on birchbark, in an instance of direct reported speech:

(23) Poklonъ ot Grikši kъ Jesifu. Prislavъ Onanьja mol[vi] [...] Jazъ jemu otvěčalъ: "Ne reklъ mi Esifъ variti perevary ni na kogo." I onъ prislalъ kъ Fedosьi: "Vari ***ty*** pivъ [...]."

> 'Greetings from Grigša to Jesif. Onan'ja sent [...]. I answered him: "Jesif has not ordered me to brew beer for anyone." And he sent to Fedosii: "***You*** brew beer [...]."'
>
> N3 / 1360–1380 / DND, 646

The use of *vy* 'you-PL' as an imperative subject is restricted to two examples in the birchbark corpus, viz. N142 and N579.[2] Take a brief look at N579:

(24) Poklono ot Borisa k Zěnověi i Fedoru. ***Vy***, moja o͡ga, daite konicka do Vidomirja věrě ci do Mstě.

> 'Greetings from Boris to Zenovii and Fedor. ***You***, my lords, give the little horse on oath to Vidomir' or to Msta.'
>
> N579 / 1360–1380 / DND, 570

For the sake of completeness, it should be added that one birchbark letter shows an imperative subject which is not a personal pronoun, viz. ***kotorei ljubo*** *potroudisja do vladyčě* '***anyone*** [of you two] go to the archbishop' (N725 / 1180–1200 / DND, 415); imperative subjects in the dual number do not occur at all.

Another feature of the imperative subject that is worth mentioning is its close connection to vocatives. In all attested cases where a vocative is also present, the encountered sequence is pronoun + vocative, never the other way round. We shall come across some more examples of this usage, which will be crucial to our argument, below. As far as the diachronic dimension is concerned (bearing in mind that the available corpus of birchbark documents comprises over four centuries of attestations), imperative subjects occur throughout the entire period, though almost half of them are attested in documents from the fourteenth century.[3]

Let us first have a closer look now at the conditions of use for the imperative subject. Because of the almost exclusive occurrence of second-person pronouns as imperative subjects, the area of present concern is narrowed down considerably compared to the scope of most theories of imperative subjects. This situation does allow us, however, to make use of a set of eight rules put forward by Zaliznjak (DND, 171–172) about the use of personal pronouns in Old Novgorodian in general. It should be noted that these rules deal not just with

2 It does, however, occur more frequently in GVNP, mainly in formulas such as *a **vy**, děti moi* 'and ***you***, my children' (GVNP 111) or *i **vy**, ljudi dobrě* 'and ***you***, good people' (GVNP 58).

3 All documents from the 14th century taken together are good for a quarter of the birchbark corpus.

the imperative, but with other types of clauses as well, so that not all of them are applicable to the present topic; in addition, the question may arise whether subjects of imperatives and, say, past tense declaratives can in fact be compared felicitously. Even so, let us first summarise Zaliznjak's rules and then determine to what extent they are valid for the imperative. According to Zaliznjak (DND, 171), a pronoun is used obligatorily in the following cases:

(i) if it is not the only subject of a predicate;
(ii) if it contrasts with the subject (or any other constituent) of the preceding sentence, or if it is otherwise emphasised;
(iii) before addressing a person (in sentences with a second-person predicate) if for semantic or syntactic reasons a conjunction is required in that position;
(iv) following the conjunctions *i* and *ti* when meaning 'then, in that case'.

In the remaining four cases, pronouns are said to occur optionally (DND, 171–172):

(v) generally in a main clause whose subject differs from the subject of the preceding main clause, and is the theme; in this case, the use of a conjunction, especially *a* in its adversative meaning, is preferred;
(vi) at the beginning of long phrases whose communicative structure requires the predicate to be positioned far from the beginning of the phrase, so that the construction is less loaded;
(vii) with a predicate that allows homonymy of person;
(viii) in the pluperfect.

Apart from the eight cases mentioned above, pronouns are not expressed. So far a summary of the only hitherto existing account of the use of pronouns in Old Novgorodian. To what extent is it a useful tool for the description of the specific subfield of imperative subjects? As we shall see, the rules that will turn out to be relevant in the case of the imperative can be subsumed under two general principles (of a contrastive and of a pragmatic nature), which various authors have already successfully employed for the description of imperative second-person subjects in languages such as Modern Russian and English, and which are likely to suffice for an adequate description of imperative subjects in Old Novgorodian as well.

5.2.1 *The Contrastive Function*

Along these lines, the abovementioned rules (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) can be subsumed under the heading of the "contrastive function" (cf. Davies 1986, Moon 1995, Fortuin 2010 for the use of this term). The other rules are not applicable to imperatives on birchbark. Let us illustrate this contrastive use of the imperative subject—consider the first imperative in the following letter:

(25) Ot Grigorii ko Dmitrou. My zdorově, a ***ty xodi***, ne boisja; miro vzjalě na staroi mežě Jurija knjazja. A menja poslalě Korele na Kajano more: a ne poměšai, ne ispakosti Kajanecamo, ni sobi prislovija vozmi. A---i poimalo dani Loneskii, vozmi i moi. A ucjuješi a ne poidu k No--, i ty togodъ idi. A doma zdorovo. A na menja věstěi perecinja. Cto aže vozmožeši, posobljai mně cimo.

'From Grigorij to Dmitr. We are well, and ***you make-IMP your rounds***, don't be afraid; they have made peace on the old border of prince Jurii. And they have sent me to Karelia, to the Kajan Sea: "don't hinder, don't do harm to the Kajan people, and don't make a bad name for yourself"! If you have collected last year's tribute, take mine also. And if you hear that I will not go to No--, then you go. And at home all is well. Send me some news. If you can, help me out with something.'

N286 / 1360–1380 / DND, 595[4]

Obviously, there is a contrast between "we" and "you" in "we are well, and you make your rounds". Zaliznjak would probably classify this one under (ii),

4 The translation of this letter is based on Gippius and Schaeken (2011). On a sidetrack, it should be noted that these authors (ibid.) have made some interesting remarks about some of the other imperatives in this letter. They view three occurrences of the imperative in N286 as instances of the "necessitive" use, for which notion they refer to Fortuin (2000: 56): "The imperative is used to express that the subject is forced or obligated to do the imperative action." Thus, the three imperatives in *a ne **poměšai**, ne **ispakosti** Kajanecamo, ni sobi prislovija **vozmi*** 'don't hinder, don't do harm to the Kajan people, and don't make a bad name for yourself' are not intended as directives for Dmitr, but rather refer to Grigorij, who reproduces these orders in the imperative with an emotive air of discontent. A similar instance of a necessitive imperative is observed by Fortejn [Fortuin] (2008: 11) in N370: *a **leži** ni ot nogo ne **otjezde*** 'and remain, don't dare to go away from him'. These instances are certainly a reflection of the language of immediacy.

The other imperatives in N286 are usual directives, voiced by Grigorij and to be executed by Dmitr. The second instance of an imperative subject in this letter (*i **ty** togodъ idi* 'then ***you*** go') will be dealt with in (27) below.

or possibly (v), as both rules could be made applicable to (25). We can see, then, that these two categories are fluid and cannot be decisively distinguished from one another, also when trying to apply them to other examples with the imperative. For rule (iii), we can return to an example already encountered in chapter 2, which Zaliznjak (DND, 171) also mentions:

(26) Poklonъ ospži mtri. Poslalъ jesmь s posadnicimъ Manuilomъ 20 bělъ k tobě. A ***ty***, Nestere, pro čicjakъ prišli ko mni gramotu, s kimъ budešъ poslalъ [...]

'Greetings to madam, mother. I have sent you 20 squirrel pelts with the governor's [man] Manuil. And ***you***, Nester, send me a letter about the helmet, [to let me know] with whom you will send it. [...]'

N358 / 1340–1360 / DND, 550

This type is, of course, of crucial interest to our subject. The pronoun in (26) signals the change of addressee that we discussed already in chapter 2, so that the contrast resides in the presence of one addressee (mother) versus another (Nester). As far as (iv) is concerned, the following example can be put forward:

(27) [...] A ucjuješi a ne poidu k No--, i ***ty*** togodъ idi. [...]

'[...] and if you hear that I will not go to No--, then ***you*** go. [...]'

N286 / 1360–1380 / DND, 595[5]

Thus, this instance of (iv) can also be explained in terms of contrast, viz. "I" versus "you". Yet, some other examples of type (iv), such as in (28), do not show an easily identifiable contrast. They may rather belong in the category that will be discussed in § 5.2.2.

(28) Poklonъ ot Smena ot [C]ixa k Sidoru. Kakъ imešь prodavatь i ***ty*** dai namъ rži [...]

'Greetings from Smen Čix to Sidor. When you will sell, then ***you*** give us rye [...]'

N364 / 1380–1400 / DND, 606

5 Among the meanings of the conjunction *i* Zaliznjak (DND: 171) distinguishes " 'то', 'тогда', 'в таком случае' " 'then, in that case'. Sreznevskij (1893–1912) does not mention this meaning, but

Anyhow, a comprehensive treatment of this type of construction lies outside the scope of the present case study.

5.2.2 *The Pragmatic Function*

What connects examples (25–27), then, is the notion of contrast. However, quite a few instances of the imperative subject cannot easily be labelled "contrastive". Consider the following example:

(29) Poklonъ ot Smena k nevěstъkě moje. Až[je] budešь ne pomina[l]a, ino u tebe solodu bylo. A solodъ ržanyi v potklětě, i ***ty*** vozmi kolobьju, a mukě kolko nadobь, i ***ty*** ispeki v měru. A mjaso na sěnьnikě. A cto rublь datь Ignatu i ***ty*** dai.

'Greetings from Smen to my daughter-in-law. In case you have not celebrated the commemoration meal: you had malt. The rye malt is in the cellar. ***You*** take a handful, and as much flour as you need, and ***you*** bake it in the [proper] measure. And the meat is in the pantry. And concerning the rouble that is due to Ignat, ***you*** give it.'

N363 / 1380–1400 / DND, 606; NGB XII, 230–231

For instances like this, several designations have been proposed in the literature. Davies (1986, 147), describing non-contrastive imperative subjects in English, perceives a connection with the notion of "authority". Fortuin (2010, 475) employs the designation "pragmatic or intersubjective function" for the description of the non-contrastive use in present-day Russian. Whereas to a certain extent the term "authority" is applicable to the situation in Old Russian (as in (29), to some degree), it should not always be taken at face value, as will become clear from the following example:

(30) Slovo dobro ot Jesifa bratu Fomě. Ne zabudь Lьva o pozъvě do rьži. A pozvale Rodivane Padinogine. A inoje vse dobro zdorovo. A ***tъ*** to pomъni.

'Greetings from Jesif to [my] brother Foma. Do not forget Lev concerning the summons [to court] [...?...]. And Rodivan Padinogin summoned him. And for the rest everything is fine. And ***you*** remember this.'

N122 / 1410–1420 / DND, 644[6]

SRJa XI–XVII (6: 75) does ("(если)—то" '(if)—then'). In the present instance, this meaning is the most probable one, as agreeing with and reinforced by the temporal adverb *togodъ* 'then'.

6 Concerning the interpretation of *a tъ* as "а ты" 'and you-SG', cf. Arcixovskij & Borkovskij

As Davies (1986, 149) herself realised, "an assumption of authority [can have] different implications", such as "real" authority expressed in commands on the one hand, versus "a concern for the addressee's well-being" on the other, when "the authority [the speaker] invokes is for the benefit of the addressee", as seems to be the case in (29) and especially (30) above. Thus, if the term "authoritative" is employed at all, it would be wise to use it in a rather more abstract sense (all the more taking into account that cross-linguistically the non-contrastive use can be compared "on an abstract level only" (cf. Fortuin 2010, 475)). As the above considerations show, an adequate description should be framed in different terms, capturing "the relation between the hearer and the speaker" (Fortuin 2010, 467). Hence, the term "pragmatic function" will be given preference here, while it is acknowledged that the exact relation between the speaker and hearer is left unspecified, for the time being, until further research will describe this relation more explicitly for the case of Old Russian.

The nature of communicatively heterogeneous texts suggests that they would license a contrastive use of imperative subjects. After all, the transition from one addressee to another implies a clear contrast. But is this suggestion supported by the data? Let us repeat the question posed at the beginning: To what extent does the personal pronoun *ty* 'you-SG', when used as an imperative subject, play a role in signalling the switch of perspective between the different parts of the abovementioned communicatively heterogeneous letters? In order to answer this question, the next step in the discussion is to pay attention to the notions of cohesion and coherence.

(NGB III; 1958: 56), who state that *tъ* is not an unusual spelling variant. This may be a slight overstatement, as *ty* is spelled as *tъ* in only three other birchbark documents, viz. N19, N129 and N788, the latter of which had, of course, not yet been found in 1958. Interestingly, N19 and N129 were also written by Jesif, i.e. they have the same author as N122 (DND: 643). Even more interestingly, in all three of Jesif's letters, *tъ* can be analysed as a non-contrastive imperative subject (one of which (N19) combines with *same*: *i tъ same* 'and you yourself').

Another option would be to read *a tъ* as *atъ* 'in order that', a rare conjunction on birchbark (only found in N681), which is, however, improbable in combination with an imperative; *atъ* indeed never combines with an imperative in any of Sreznevskij's (1893: 31) examples from other sources, either.

Another consideration that might need some more investigation is the somewhat detached position of the words *a tъ to pomъni* 'and you remember this', which might be an indication of a different "writing event" (a term used by Schaeken 2011a: 6 regarding N497).

5.3 The Imperative Subject as a Cohesive Device

Cohesion is described by Halliday & Hasan (1976, 4) as follows: "the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another" (see below for some examples). It should be noted that the concept of cohesion is often confused with that of coherence. It has repeatedly been stressed that, whereas cohesion is attained by ties between elements on the surface of a text, "coherence is a mental phenomenon" (Gernsbacher & Givón 1995, vii); it does not reside within the text as such. At the most, cohesive markers in a text can be said to contribute to its coherence. But what is coherence? Most definitions that have been given remain fairly vague. Most of them contain some allusion to the reader, to whom a coherent text makes sense, or who envisages a text in the same way as the writer. Coherence is probably best described as "the connectedness of discourse" (Sanders & Pander Maat 2006, 592) that is formed in the mind of the reader.

The title of Tanskanen's (2006) monograph, *Collaborating Towards Coherence*, is especially telling in this respect, since establishing coherence is a joint effort, just like everything else in a discourse, be it in spoken or written form (cf. Clark 1996). Coherence is not only attained by elements that the writer puts into the text; whether a text will be perceived as coherent also depends on the knowledge and activity of the reader, who forms a "mental representation of the text" (Sanders & Pander Maat 2006, 592). In the light of this consideration, the importance of cohesive ties can be put into an appropriate perspective, that is, they can be viewed as being subordinate to coherence.

Now that the notions of cohesion and coherence have been mentioned, we can use the following English sentence (from Shakespeare) to illustrate how cohesion can be attained in the case of the second-person pronoun *you*: "I wonder that you will still be talking, signior Benedick". Using this sentence, Busse (2006, 111) argues that the vocative *signior Benedick* is co-referential with the personal pronoun *you*—in other words, that a semantic tie exists between the vocative phrase and the pronoun. This can be visualised as follows:

(31) semantic tie

I wonder that ***you*** will still be talking, ***signior Benedick***.

Thus, in the case of (31), the meaning of *you* is dependent on that of *signior Benedick*. In other words, without taking into account the vocative *signior Benedick* it remains unclear, or at least implicit, to whom *you* refers, i.e. to whom the utterance is addressed (apart from possible clues provided by the

sequence of turn-taking). The vocative makes the addressee explicit. This is what is meant by "the speaker selection function of the vocative" (Busse 2006, 241), where the term *speaker* selection is used because the current speaker, by addressing the person who is supposed to answer him, indicates who is to be the speaker in the next turn of the discourse. Consequently, vocatives, in their "speaker selection function", can be analysed as cohesive elements.[7] It should be noted that in the basic language setting, as discussed in § 2.3, speaker selection normally takes place by way of eye contact; we shall return to the basic language setting in § 5.4 below.

The cohesive principle which is illustrated in (31) can be applied to instances like (26), by assigning the pronoun *ty* 'you-SG' a cohesive function. Terming second-person pronouns a cohesive device may seem odd at first sight. After all, Halliday & Hasan (1976, 51) explicitly describe them as "non-cohesive" pronouns, or as exophoric reference items, i.e. they refer to entities outside the text, whereas cohesive devices, such as third-person pronouns, tend to refer to other entities within the text (endophoric reference) that precede (anaphoric reference) or follow (cataphoric reference) the cohesive device. However, as we have seen in (31), elements that are traditionally not viewed as cohesive, such as vocatives, may in fact turn out to have cohesive properties, after all. The abovementioned examples from the birchbark corpus can be analysed in a similar way. Let us return to the switch of reference in (26).

(26′) semantic tie

a	*ty*	*Nestere*
and	you-NOM.SG	Nester-VOC

The pronoun is a cohesive device here, having a cataphoric reference tie with the vocative. In this way, the second-person pronoun is similar to the third-person pronoun (which occurs, however, more often anaphorically rather than cataphorically), as is shown in instances like the following textbook example (Halliday & Hasan 1976, 54), where *he* refers back to *John* (and *it* to *a new house*, for that matter):

7 It should be noted that in this particular case much more can be said about the function of the vocative *signior Benedick* than that of speaker selection alone—"its role extends far beyond that of the targeting function" (Busse 2006: 112). Some overlap can be perceived with what is treated as the "pragmatic function" of the imperative subject in the present article, e.g. more emotional involvement, and similar factors.

(32) John has moved to a new house. He had it built last year.

Interestingly, Halliday & Hasan, though not considering the possibility of a cohesive second-person pronoun, do leave room for an endophoric use of the first-person pronoun *we*, as in the following example, put forward by them (1976, 50):

(33) My husband and I are leaving. We have seen quite enough of this unpleasantness.

Not only does *we* here provide the "rudimentary meaning" of "the speaker plus other(s)" (Ariel 2010, 101), but it also refers anaphorically, and more precisely, to *my husband and I*, and is, therefore, not just a deictic, but also a cohesive device. As we have seen, a similar analysis can be made for *you*.[8]

It will be profitable at this point to take a look at a part of an example from GVNP again, which we have encountered already as example (11) in chapter 2:

(34)

A	*prikazalъ*	*esmi*	*ixъ*	*bljusti*
and	order-PERF.SG.M	COP.PRS.1SG	them-ACC	protect-INF
Merkurьju;	*a*	***ty,***	*Merkurei,*	*po*
Merkurii-DAT	and	you-NOM	Merkurii-VOC	according to
moei	*gramotě*	*bljudi*	*ixъ*	
my-DAT.SG	letter-DAT.SG	protect-IMP.2SG	them-ACC	

'And I have ordered [i.e. I hereby order] Merkurii to protect them; and you, Merkurii, protect them according to my letter.'

In this example, the second-person pronoun *ty* obviously links with the following vocative, just like in (26′). In addition, this link is reinforced by the occurrence of another element in the previous clause—*Merkurьju*. Both elements are, of course, co-referential: they coincide semantically, i.e. they denote the same referent. Thus, the topic of the discourse remains the same, while its role changes from side participant to addressee.[9]

8 Note that the tie between pronoun and vocative in (26′) is intra-sentential cohesion, which is often discarded as of little importance, being superseded by the sentence's grammatical structure anyway (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976: 9), but here we see that intra-sentential cohesion can contribute to inter-sentential (i.e. textual) coherence (more about which below), as it makes the letter's referential organization (or referential boundary) explicit.

9 The semantic coincidence here is unequivocal because of the names being identical. In other

So first of all, a side participant is mentioned, who is then "promoted" to the position of addressee. Thus, the referent is referred to in more than one part of a communicatively heterogeneous letter (though playing different roles in the different parts of the communicative act). This co-reference facilitates the text's coherence, i.e. the two parts of the text, on both sides of the referential boundary (cf. below), are connected by this referent. But does this mean that a cohesive tie should be supposed that refers back from *ty* to *Merkurьju*? In other words, can *ty* here have anaphoric as well as cataphoric reference?

Halliday & Hasan (1976, 50) state that second-person pronouns cannot be cohesive unless they occur in "quoted [i.e. direct] speech; and so [they] are normally anaphoric in many varieties of written language, such as narrative fiction". Direct reported speech is characterized by a shift of perspective, so that a referential boundary occurs between the main text and the stretch of reported speech. Thus, a referent mentioned in the third person in the main text can occur as the addressee (*you*) of a stretch of direct reported speech. The *you* then refers back to the referent mentioned in the third person before: "Somewhere or other in the narrative will be names or designations to which we can relate the *I* and *you* of the dialogue" (ibid.).

A similar shift of perspective can be seen in (34), i.e. from side participant (third person) to addressee (second person). However, the difference here is that the interpretation of *ty* does not exactly depend on the link of co-reference with the preceding name. After all, there is already a strong cataphoric tie with the vocative *Merkurei*, and in addition, theoretically speaking *ty* could have referred to a totally different addressee, e.g. **a ty, Ivane* 'and you, Ivan'. Thus, the tie with the preceding *Merkurьju* cannot be properly termed cohesive, or anaphoric, though it is co-referential (indicated by the dotted line in (34)). Thus, in a sense, the referent is transferred over the referential boundary, which creates coherence, but this coherence is not attained by cohesion *sensu stricto*.

The question might be asked: Why should one make so much of pronouns at all? Why not just consider names and phrases in the vocative case? First of all, a vocative without a pronoun never signals a switch of addressee in the birchbark corpus.[10] Secondly, we can turn to an example where the pronoun's referen-

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cases, we may not be able to substantiate the existence of such a co-referential tie; e.g. in N253 (example (36) below), it remains a hypothesis at best.

10 A possible exception was unearthed recently (N1054 / 1260–1300 / NGB XII: 154), where the switch of addressee may be signalled by a vocative only: *Kure! Dai grěvnu i 3 kunъ* 'Kur! Give a *grivna* and 3 *kunas*.' As the editors acknowledge, an alternative reading with a third-person imperative is also possible, viz. "Let Kur give a *grivna* and 3 *kunas*." In that case, the letter is not communicatively heterogeneous.

tial force is not realised by way of a cataphoric tie, i.e. it is not followed by a name in the vocative:

(35) Pokono ot Maskima ko popu. Dai ključi Fomi. A ***ty*** poši Grigoriju Onefimova. Čto b(u)[d](e na)dobi ---at--------e Foma.

'Greetings from Maskim to the priest. Give the keys to Foma. And ***you*** send Grigorija Onfimov. If anything is needed [...] Foma-NOM.'

N177 / 1360–1380 / DND, 582

Gippius (2004, 197) interprets *A ty poši Grigoriju Onefimova* 'and you send Grigorija Onfimov' as being addressed not to the priest, but to Foma. Čerepnin (1969, 316) already proposes this interpretation, without, however, providing arguments for his view. Gippius arrives at the same conclusion by drawing an analogy with N253, written by the same author Maksim, where *a ty* 'and you' unambiguously signals speaker selection, i.e. indicates a change of addressee, because it is accompanied by a vocative:

(36) Ot Maksima ko Desjascjanamo. Datь Melejanu 8 dеže, naklado i veši. A ***ty***, starosto, sberi.

'From Maksim to the inhabitants of Desjatskoe. [You are to] give Mel'jan 8 *dežas*[11]—interest and grain. And ***you***, elder-VOC, collect [them].'

N253 / 1360–1380 / DND, 583

In the first part of (36) the villagers are addressed, and in the second part the village elder, who is most probably the same person as Meljan, as Gippius (2004, 197) concludes by analogy with N177. If Gippius's (2004, 197) suggestion that *Melejanu* 'Mel'jan-DAT' and *starosto* 'elder-VOC' refer to the same person is correct, which is taken for granted here, we can assume an analysis similar to that in (34), i.e. for its interpretation the second-person pronoun relies on the cataphoric referential tie (from *ty* 'you-SG' to *starosto* 'elder'). Although the preceding name *Melejanu* 'Mel'jan-DAT' does not contribute to the felicitous interpretation of *ty* 'you-SG', the co-referential tie does connect both parts of the letter, thus supporting the coherence of the letter as a whole.[12]

11 A *deža* is a measure of grain (SRJa XI–XVII 4: 201).

12 In that case, by the way, the reason why Meljan is addressed as *starosto* 'village elder', and not by his name, serves to underline his position among the villagers. It does not

To return to example (35), Gippius (ibid.) argues that because Foma has already been mentioned in the preceding phrase, repeating his name in a following vocative is considered redundant. In addition, Gippius (ibid.) states that if both imperatives referred to the same person, there would be no way to account for the presence of the conjunction and the second-person pronoun (*a ty* 'and you'). Another consideration that Gippius (ibid.) mentions, is the fact that after a gap later on in the letter (the latter part of which is, unfortunately, severely damaged) Foma is mentioned in the third person. This might be seen as an argument against the abovementioned interpretation, but Gippius (ibid.) follows a line of reasoning in which the priest later on resumes the role of addressee; the instruction given to Foma is still indirectly also addressed to the priest, who has to be convinced that it is safe to give the keys to Grigor'ja Onfimov, whom Gippius (ibid.) considers to be the letter-bearer, sent by Foma to collect the keys for him from the priest.[13]

It would follow from this that the pronoun *ty* 'you-SG' is co-referential with *Fomi* 'Foma-DAT'.[14] Does this imply that *ty* can also be said to have an anaphoric tie with *Fomi*? In a sense, the construction in (35) can be seen as a "truncated" version of the one in (34). Again, the pronoun can only be seen as a cohesive element if its interpretation relies on the link of co-reference with the preceding name. Although in (35) there is no cataphoric tie with a vocative, as is the case in (34), the interpretation of *ty* cannot be exclusively dependent on *Fomi*;

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mean that Maksim is Meljan's subordinate, but rather that Maksim takes the perspective of the villagers, who are subordinate to Meljan and have to approach him as such. Thus, mentioning his function is more effective than mentioning his name; in other words, the designation *starosto* 'village elder' assigns a greater authority to Meljan than only his name would have done.

13 It should be borne in mind that this way of reasoning does not lead to absolute certainty about the role patterns of the participants mentioned in this letter. For some letters which have been analysed within a pragmaphilological framework, a communicatively heterogeneous interpretation is actually the only plausible one. In the present case, Gippius's statement can be nothing more than a hypothesis—although, it is true, a quite plausible one within the line of thinking in the rest of his article (2004). Another remaining caveat should also be noticed, arising from our discussion of imperative subjects, viz. the possibility that *ty* is an instance of the abovementioned pragmatic function, and hence non-contrastive, and not indicative of a switch of perspective. In this case, a communicatively heterogeneous interpretation would be excluded. Nevertheless, we will, for the time being, abide by Gippius's (2004) interpretation.

14 This, by the way, is the reason why Gippius, by analogy, considers Meljan to be the village elder in N253, as we already mentioned above, when discussing (36). Note in this respect that N177 and N253 have the same author Maksim and are written in the same hand.

rather, the major part of its interpretation has to be negotiated *in situ*, i.e. by extratextual means. Thus, if a cohesive tie can be posited there at all, it will have to play a merely secondary role, the primary role being reserved for contextual aspects allowed for by the letter's oral performance, which will be elaborated on in § 5.4 below. Still, the relation of co-reference between *Fomi* and *ty* cannot be ignored, and should be seen as a factor that creates a coherence which transcends the referential boundary between both parts of the letter.

In summary, it can be said that (35) most likely expresses a contrast (by the contrastive function of the imperative subject), but not the nature of that contrast; i.e., the target of speaker selection remains implicit.

So apparently, the state of affairs in (35) is considered sufficient to bring about speaker selection. However, the same is true of texts like the following (which was introduced as communicatively heterogeneous in chapter 2 already), where no second-person pronoun is present:

(37) Ot Petra kъ Vasilevi. Vъdai 6 kounъ i grivьnou Vyšjatě. Ali ti ne dastь a pristavi na nь otrokъ.

'From Petr to Vasil'. Give 6 *kunas* and a *grivna* to Vyšata. If he doesn't give [them], then send a court official after him.'

St.R.15 / 1140–1160 / DND, 328

On the basis of some of the abovementioned examples we might expect the contrastive use of a second-person pronoun in the last clause of (37)—**a* ***ty*** *pristavi na nь otrokъ* 'and ***you*** send a court official after him'—ideally even forming a cohesive tie with a following vocative—**a* ***ty, Vyšato,*** *pristavi na nь otrokъ* 'and ***you, Vyšata***, send a court official after him'. If we want to abide by Gippius's interpretation, we are obliged to acknowledge that a second-person pronoun is not an obligatory device for signalling a switch of reference. In other words, speaker selection takes place in a different way, at least in instances like (37). But how? The question as to why the "contrast" between Vasil' and Vyšata is not made explicit there by way of a second-person pronoun is left unanswered. In order to answer this question, we have to turn away from a purely linguistic analysis, and resort instead to external factors of a pragmaphilological nature. In other words, the context in which the writer envisaged the fulfilment of the letter's function, and, in connection with that, the letter's genre, has to be taken into account. Some attention will be devoted to this topic in the next section (§ 5.4).

But let us first recapitulate a few points. Overall, it appears that imperatives in communicatively heterogeneous contexts constitute a special subclass of

TABLE 5 *Types of communicative heterogeneity*

Type	№	Ex.	Pronoun	Vocative	Imperative
Overt	N358	(26)	*ty*	*Nestere*	*prišli*
Intermediate	N177	(35)	*ty*	∅	*poši*
Hidden	St.R.15	(37)	∅	∅	*pristavi*

the contrastive type, in which the use of a pronoun is not obligatory. The distinction between "overt" and "hidden" communicative heterogeneity (cf. Gippius 2004) can now be formulated in terms of whether or not a cohesive tie is formed in the way as described above, i.e. between a second-person pronoun and a name or other designation in the vocative. If such a cohesive tie is formed, the speaker selection, or switch of reference, is overt, as in (26); if not, it is hidden, as in (37), or "intermediate", as in (35).

To put it differently, we have seen several possibilities for communicatively heterogeneous letters. First of all, the contrast as well as the speaker selection may be made explicit, as in (26) and (34). Secondly, only the contrast may be expressed explicitly, by a second-person pronoun as an imperative subject, but without explicit speaker selection, i.e. without a vocative, as in (35). Thirdly, both the contrast and the speaker selection may be left implicit, as in (37). These three types are represented in Table 5.

An overview of the respective occurrences of the three types throughout the birchbark corpus is represented in Table 6. Their chronological distribution might seem to suggest that hidden communicative heterogeneity occurs more often in the earlier centuries, but the number of instances is too small to draw any hard and fast conclusions about a diachronic development within the birchbark corpus.

As we shall see in the next section, the pronoun and vocative are not suppressed haphazardly. In other words, the overt expression of contrast and speaker selection is optional only when the situation of performance compensates for the absence of a pronoun and vocative by a reliance on the oral component. Consequently, the contrast that needs to be conveyed in case of a switch of addressee can be expressed intra-textually, by an imperative subject (often supplemented by a vocative to make speaker selection explicit, too), or extra-textually, by elements connected to the letter's oral situation of performance.

TABLE 6 *Instances of communicative heterogeneity*

Type	№	Date	Ex.
Overt	N831	1140–1160	(3)
	N358	1340–1360	(26)
	N414	1340–1360	
	N253	1360–1380	(36)
Intermediate	N177	1360–1380	(35)
Hidden[15]	Smol. 12	1100–1200	
	St.R.15	1140–1160	(37)
	N509	1160–1180	(10)
	N420	1240–1260	(9)
	N771	1300–1320	
	N354	1340–1360	(7)

5.4 The Oral Component

We have already mentioned a consideration of prime importance as regards the function of letters, viz. that they were often read out aloud by the messenger. Accordingly, the situation in which the letter played its part was such that any specific designations of the identity of the present addressee were often not deemed a necessary component of the text itself. Such indications were rather left to the context of performance and the communicative skills of the letter-bearer or messenger. In this way, the letter's internal "weight" was relieved by disposing of perceived redundant elements that would be expressed orally anyway. This means that the letter's contents were in close interaction with the oral performance by which it was accompanied (cf. Gippius 2004, 204), as it would have been difficult or even impossible to interpret the letter without recourse to its context of performance. In other words, the letter is highly context-dependent.

It is at this point that a significant difference arises between the birchbark letters and the GVNP documents. In the latter, a switch of reference, or speaker

15 For a treatment of the hidden communicative heterogeneity in these letters, see Gippius (2004). For N771, see Schaeken (2014: 158–162). Some more instances of hidden communicative heterogeneity could be mentioned (e.g. N406), where no imperatives are present, which makes them fall outside the scope of the present investigation.

selection, seems to be always marked overtly by a pronoun plus a vocative, i.e. a language-internal factor within the text.[16] This explicitness is in accordance with the formality and the legal significance of the documents. In order to attain absolute legal certainty, every aspect of the transaction or will had to be made explicit; no "underspecification" could be permitted. Birchbark letters, in contrast, were often of a less formal kind, and required, therefore, less explicit language; more reliance on the context of oral performance could be afforded (though there are exceptions, such as legal texts of a more formal nature). Secondly, relating to that, the GVNP documents were generally not (or not only) intended to be delivered to an addressee and read out aloud by the messenger, but apparently to be preserved for future reference, so that all participants had to be made explicit for future readers who did not have any situational clues. Birchbark letters, on the other hand, generally had a far more ephemeral character; they were only intended for use in a specific situation, and were often to be discarded afterwards. Another consideration that should be taken into account is the fact that the GVNP documents are by and large of a somewhat later date; as people became more accustomed to (the peculiarities of) the written medium of communication, former oral features were disposed of, and the written word and its conventions—directed at a greater explicitness—took a more central position in settling matters.

It follows that for instances like (35) and (37) we still need a common-sense situational analysis; a linguistic tool is not enough to decisively answer any questions about speaker selection. After all, the application of this approach has shown that the second-person pronoun does not provide a linguistic parameter for determining whether a letter is communicatively heterogeneous or not. To what extent, then, do the above considerations provide a telling explanation for the occurrence of second-person pronouns and enable us to make an attempt towards formulating an adequate conclusion about the way in which speaker selection takes place in birchbark letters?

It is good to notice that one of the main points of criticism that have been ventured against Halliday & Hasan's (1976) position by various authors (e.g. Brown & Yule 1983) concerns their statement that cohesion is a necessary condition for achieving textual unity. As has been demonstrated by (37), and also abundantly by a variety of textbook examples not quoted here, a text can very well exist without any cohesive markers at all. Coherence just has to be achieved in a different way, i.e. within a situation of oral performance.

16 A thorough quantitative analysis of this material will have to be postponed until further research is conducted. A few examples of overt speaker selection can be found in GVNP 81, 84, 110, 111, 295.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

The discovery of communicative heterogeneity in birchbark letters (Gippius 2004) has opened up a whole field of research and a vast array of theoretical concepts relating to the notion of orality. This consideration has led me to look at imperative subjects as one of the linguistic parameters to be investigated as to their potential pragmatic role in connection with an oral component in the communicative constellation of the birchbark letters. We can now answer the question that was posed at the beginning of this chapter: To what extent does the personal pronoun *ty* 'you-SG', when used as an imperative subject, play a role in signalling the switch of perspective between the different parts of the abovementioned communicatively heterogeneous letters? Furthermore, the role of imperative subjects will have to be linked to the main research question, i.e. how imperative subjects (or the lack thereof) can be a manifestation of orality in the birchbark letters.

The hypothesis was that the contrast between different addressees would be signalled by a personal pronoun. As we have seen, imperative subject pronouns can indeed have a contrastive function. One would expect the switch from one addressee to the next to provide an ideal environment for the contrastive use of an imperative subject pronoun. We can now look back and conclude whether this hypothesis comes true.

As some of the above examples have shown, it is not always easy to distinguish between the two categories of imperative subjects (contrastive and pragmatic), which is, inevitably, attributable to our limited insight into the context of the texts on birchbark. Still, the distinction can prove to be a useful classification tool. The imperative subject in non-contrastive settings does not play a role in terms of speaker selection (though, of course, it is useful in other respects, such as expressing certain pragmatic factors discussed above). In contrastive settings, on the other hand, of which communicative heterogeneity is a subtype, the pronoun functions as a speaker selection device, i.e. it "targets" the next speaker, thereby making the addressee of the utterance explicit. We have seen, however, that even this contrastive function can be made redundant and disposed of within a context of oral performance.

Semantic ties can be formed between second-person pronouns and vocatives, and in this sense second-person pronouns can be seen as cohesive devices, contributing to textual coherence. Accordingly, Halliday & Hasan's basic definition of cohesion can easily be extended to instances of a second-person pronoun as the subject of an imperative clause. In spite of this, cohesion, at least insofar it can be expressed by the imperative subject, is by far not always a relevant factor in heterogeneously contrastive environments. In other words,

a pronoun is by far not always dependent on cohesive ties for its interpretation, though cohesive ties can facilitate the pronoun's interpretation in those instances where a felicitous interpretation is not guaranteed by clues in the letter's external context of performance.

The above considerations have reinforced the view that cohesion by means of a pronoun and a vocative is very much an optional device and in no way a prerequisite for coherence; at the most, it facilitates coherence and, along with that, the ease of a text's interpretation, at least for accidental "overreaders" (cf. Clarks' (1996, 14) notion of "overhearers") such as present-day readers are in the case of medieval birchbark letters. In some cases, as has been seen, a letter's communicatively heterogeneous interpretation can be explained by the occurrence of a second-person pronoun as a cohesive marker. Other cases, that do not show any such marker, are a challenge to this approach; they require a greater role to be played by other theories, most probably in the field of coherence, not of cohesion, in interplay with the letter's context of oral performance. Schaeken (2011a, 8) formulates a similar consideration, in the context of a slightly different kind of communicative heterogeneity, as follows: "The communicative coherence of the written text would be guaranteed by the intermediary role of the messenger." In Clark's (1996) terms, the "basic language setting" of the letter's oral performance diminishes or even eliminates the need for "special (cohesive) techniques" to be employed, which is one of the reasons why cohesive devices may be absent. Intra-sentential cohesion can thus contribute to inter-sentential (textual) coherence, but, under the right circumstances, the latter can also be attained without the former.

To sum up: there are instances in which the imperative subject has a signalling function to indicate a switch of addressee, typically in combination with a vocative; this is what makes communicative heterogeneity "overt". The absence of an imperative subject is what makes communicative heterogeneity "hidden". In that case, coherence is attained thanks to the oral context in which the letter is presented by the messenger.

In addition, a tentative statement may carefully be posited about a possible correlation between cohesion and context-independent written language. Or, in slightly different terms, a decrease in cohesion can be said to correlate with the degree to which the letter was envisaged to function in an oral setting.

CHAPTER 6

Case Study 11: Speech Reporting

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, our attention will be focused on methods of speech reporting in birchbark letters, and the ways in which these various methods can be linked to the orality-literacy continuum. The question to be answered in this chapter is as follows: What is the distribution of the various speech reporting strategies throughout the birchbark corpus, and to what extent can this distribution be analysed as a reflection of orality or literacy?

First of all, the well-known basic opposition between direct and indirect reported speech will be discussed (§ 6.2). Secondly, some more terminology will be introduced (§ 6.3). Elaborating on that, all occurrences of speech reporting in the birchbark corpus will be identified and classified according to five different speech reporting strategies (direct speech, indirect speech, narrative report of speech act, free direct speech, and free indirect speech). Each strategy will first be introduced and illustrated by an English example, followed by some representative birchbark examples and by a table containing all instances of the particular speech reporting strategy throughout the birchbark corpus (§ 6.4). Following on this, the diachronic ordering of the occurrences on birchbark will be addressed (§ 6.5). So far we have the description and classification of the data.

The second part of the chapter will serve to discuss the data in view of answering our research question. The speech reporting strategies will be placed along a continuum (§ 6.6), described in terms developed by Leech & Short (1981). Some words will be devoted to the way in which the continuum of speech reporting strategies operates, which is connected to the notions of context-dependence and complexity (§ 6.7). At that point, we can proceed to determine how this continuum and the various categories of reported speech can be incorporated into our main topic of orality and literacy. These thoughts will be put into their right perspective by looking at functional motivations for the choice of a certain strategy (§ 6.8), and to some further outlooks about additional connections between the topic of speech reporting and that of orality (§§ 6.9–6.10).

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6.2 Speech Reporting Strategies

A notion that can be used to describe the concept of speech reporting is "polyphony", a term introduced by Bakhtin (1929/1984, *passim*). Although it can be understood in a much broader sense, this term will for present purposes be taken in the straightforward sense that there are several voices within a stretch of discourse. In the case of the birchbark letters, the voice of the author is rendered in the main body of the letter, into which the voice of another person can be embedded, for which various strategies can be used. As an example, we can quote one birchbark letter already:

(38) Ot Radъka kъ otьcьvi poklanjanie. Tovarьcь esьmo posъlalь Smolьnь-skou. A Poutilou ti oubili, a xotjatь ny jati vъ Fomou sъ Vjacьšьkoju, a mъlъvja: ***"Zaplatite četyri sъta grivьnъ ili a zovite Fomou sěmo, paky li da vъsadimo vy vъ pogrьbo."*** I poklanjanie ot Vjacьšьkě kъ Lazorьvi. Poslalь esmь konь jukovoucько, a samь esmь dospělь.

'Greetings from Radko to father. I have sent the goods to Smolensk. But they have murdered Putila, and they want me and Vjačeska instead of Foma, saying: ***"Pay four hundred grivnas or call Foma here, otherwise we will put you in jail."*** And greetings from Vjačeska to Lazor'. I have sent the packhorse, and I myself am ready.'

N952 / 1140–1160 / NGB XII, 46

Before proceeding to the way in which the speech reporting strategies are represented in the birchbark corpus, let us first provide an overview of the theoretical notions to be employed for this description. When thinking of speech reporting, what comes to mind is a report by one speaker or author (the **reporter**) of the words of another person (the **reported speaker**). As Coulmas (1986, 12) puts it:

> The speaker does not claim authorship for a part of his utterance which he ascribes to another speaker or unspecified source. This part of his utterance does not serve a regular referential function such that words refer to things. Rather, they refer to words, not to any arbitrary words, that is, but purportedly to those words that some other speaker uttered at some other time.

Traditionally, instances of speech reporting are divided into "**direct**" and "**indirect reported speech**". Let us have a look at two prototypical sentences which distinguish these two strategies:[1]

(39) ***John*** said, "***I***'m tired."

(40) ***John*** said (that) ***he*** was tired.
LI 1986, 29

The two sentences seem to have the same general meaning and a similar structure: a narrative **frame** (*John said*) which contains a **tag** (*verbum dicendi*, i.e. speech act verb) (*said*), and a stretch of reported speech. It is obvious that the latter constitutes the difference between (39) and (40): *I'm tired* versus (*that*) *he was tired*. But in what respects does the stretch of reported speech differ in both sentences? Li (ibid.) points out some of the differences, viz. that the pronouns and the verb tenses are different, and also that (40), but not (39), may contain an optional complementizer (*that*). Finally, there is a difference in interpunction (quotation marks). We shall later on return to these parameters to see whether they hold for Old Russian, too, but we shall first of all stick to the English examples.

Let us first focus on the difference in pronouns. In the stretch of indirect speech in (40), the pronoun conforms to the referential organization of the surrounding narrative frame: *John* and *he* are both third-person referents. In the stretch of direct speech in (39), on the other hand, the pronoun conforms to the original utterance: the third-person *John* from the narrative frame becomes first-person *I* in the stretch of reported speech. Thus, where the switch from one perspective (narrative) to the other (direct speech) takes place, an abrupt referential boundary occurs. In the case of indirect speech, such a boundary is absent. It is the presence or absence of this referential boundary that will prove to be a point of crucial interest below.

According to Li (1986, 30), "the existence of different pronominalization strategies for the two constructions is universal". We can, thus, assume for the time being that these insights can be transferred to the data on birchbark.

1 The term "strategy" is used to draw attention to the fact that an author can choose one out of several ways of rendering reported speech; in that sense, he pursues a certain strategy (ideally, the most suitable strategy) in order to convey his message. This does not mean, however, that it is always a conscious, strategic choice. In fact, we shall encounter examples below which provide evidence that it can be an unconscious "choice".

We shall see later on that this is indeed true and, in fact, the only applicable "diagnostic criterion" (ibid., 32).

Collins (1996, 2001) applies the same insights to some other Old Russian data. According to him, the difference between direct and indirect speech lies in the question whether deictic expressions in the stretch of reported speech are **shifted** (direct speech) or **transparent** (indirect speech); that is to say, in other words, whether or not a **switch** of referential perspective occurs between the frame and the report (Collins 1996, 29; 2001, 66–67). This terminology will be used in the rest of this chapter.[2]

Other, and often fuzzier, definitions of direct and indirect speech have been given in the (earlier) literature. Jespersen (1924, 290), for instance, states that in direct speech "the exact words of the speaker" are given, whereas in indirect speech the words are adapted "to the circumstances in which they are now quoted" (ibid.). Later authors couch the same idea in slightly different words, such as Li (1986, 38), who states that in direct reported speech both the form and the content of the reported utterance are reproduced; in indirect speech, then, only the content is conveyed, the form belonging to the current speaker (ibid.). However, Collins (2001, 51) argues that this "verbatimness model of [direct speech] is not tenable"; after all, the "form" or "the exact words of the [source] speaker" are always affected by the process of reproduction by the current speaker, be it intentional or not. Even a phrase that was originally uttered in a different language can be rendered in direct speech (Roncador 1988, 38). Collins's definitions, centring on deixis, will turn out to be an adequate starting point for a description of speech reporting strategies in the birchbark corpus. Collins shows that for Old Church Slavonic (1996) and Old Russian (2001) other, mainly syntactic, definitions are superfluous and not applicable, taking into account that "[reported speech] is a category of discourse analysis rather than syntax" (2001, 11).

6.3 Some Terminological Considerations

Recall the definition of reported speech given by Coulmas (1986, 12; see § 6.2 above), who mentions that words are reported which were uttered by "some other speaker [...] at some other time". Now, in order to felicitously describe

2 These statements about deixis do not mean that there can never be any other, supplementary criteria for determining whether a report is direct or indirect speech. Two additional factors that are relevant to the birchbark corpus (as we shall see below) are imperatives and vocatives, both of which are unmistakable elements of direct speech.

speech reporting strategies on birchbark, we shall take a closer look at the participants involved, and label them with formal designations. Coulmas's "some other speaker" is termed "**reported speaker**" (Coulmas 1986, 2), who pronounces an utterance in the "**reported speech act**", whereas the person who reports these words is called the "**reporter**" (ibid.), who conducts a "**reporting speech act**".

Another question concerns the persons at whom the reported and reporting utterances are aimed. On the one hand, there is the addressee of the reported speech act (the "**reported addressee**", Li 1986, 31), on the other hand, there is the addressee of the reporting speech act (in terms of the birchbark corpus: the **letter's addressee**).

The term "reported speech" seems straightforward, in the sense that some utterance, pronounced by the reported speaker in the past, is reproduced by the reporter (recall the definition given by Coulmas, § 6.2); this is, however, a somewhat misleading definition. It should be noted that we do not always have reported speech in the abovementioned meaning of the term, as the "reported" words may have to be pronounced by the addressee in the future. It is, therefore, appropriate to divide instances of "reported speech" into two functional categories, which I shall call "**narrative**" and "**instructive**". The former term is used by various authors (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 2007), and denotes the reporting of some utterance that was pronounced by someone in the past, usually in the framework of a story (i.e. the "classic" definition of reported speech). In the instructive category, on the other hand, the reporter "reports" an utterance (formulated by himself) that he wants the addressee to pronounce in front of a third person at some future point of time; it will be seen below that this category is particularly relevant to the birchbark corpus, so that it is deemed appropriate here to introduce the term "instructive" for these instances of speech reporting.[3]

(41) [...] could you take the man's name and number, and ***tell*** him ***I***'ll try to call ***him*** before ***I*** leave Paris on Tuesday?

DAN BROWN, *The Da Vinci Code*

We see here an instance of indirect speech (there is no deictic shift), but the reported speaker and the reporter coincide; he gives instructions about what

3 Although Couper-Kuhlen (2007: 81) notes that studies of speech reporting are usually confined to narrative reported speech, she does not specify any other instances more precisely than by the general term "non-narrative" (2007: 82).

someone else should say at some point in the future. He, as it were, "reports" speech that originates in himself, but is envisaged to be uttered in the future. The crucial distinction between narrative and instructive reported speech will be reverted to more than once in the following sections. As will be seen below, quite a number of instances of reported speech in the birchbark corpus are of the instructive type; "represented speech" might, therefore, be a more suitable term than "reported speech", as no speech from the past is "reported" in instructive contexts. For reasons of uniformity we shall nonetheless stick to the established expression "reported speech". Another terminological difficulty concerns the fact that in instructive reported speech no participant can be called "reported speaker" *sensu strictissimo*. Rather, there is the "prospective" or "envisaged" speaker of a future speech act, who coincides with the addressee of the reporting speech act. This is a difficulty that is not covered by prevalent terminology in current theories of speech reporting. Collins (1996, 39), in passing, uses the term "potential speech act", which might incline us to use the term "potential speaker" for the person who is supposed to pronounce the reported utterance in the future.

The difference between narrative and instructive reported speech may actually be symptomatic for a more fundamental difference in the application of writing:

> Wyróżnić można dwa rodzaje zastosowania pisma. Po pierwsze pismo jest zapisem wcześniejszej od niego mowy, utrwaleniem języka mówionego, po drugie zaś jest ono myślą ludzką od razu zapisaną, bez pośredniego stadium mowy.
>
> LABOCHA 2004, 7

> Two kinds of the application of writing can be distinguished. Firstly, writing is the recording of earlier speech, a record of spoken language, whereas secondly, it is human thought directly written down, without the intermediate stage of speech.

In terms introduced in § 4.5.3, the difference comes down to whether a text is "speech-based" or not.

6.4 The Data on Birchbark

We shall now proceed to a discussion of the occurrences of direct (§ 6.4.1) and indirect speech (§ 6.4.2) on birchbark, as well as the two other strategies

that remain to be introduced below (narrative report of speech act, § 6.4.3, and free direct speech, § 6.4.4). When thinking of the terms "direct" and "indirect reported speech", our present-day literate mind tends to connect them to colons, quotation marks and other graphic devices in printed texts (cf. the English examples (39) and (40)). Needless to say, none of these punctuation marks are available in the birchbark letters (though for clarity's sake they have been added to the transcription in the examples below). Consequently, only a pragmaphilological analysis will be suitable to provide a decisive answer about the speech reporting strategies that are employed. Inasmuch as possible, examples of each strategy will be given in the narrative as well as the instructive variants.

6.4.1 *Direct Speech*

We shall first have a look at instances of direct speech. We shall start with the instructive type:

(42) Ot Savy poklanjanee kъ bratьi i droužine. Ostavili mja byli ljudьe, da ostatь dani ispraviti bylo im doseni a po pervomou pouti poslati i otъbyti proče. I zaslavъ Zaxarьja vъ v[ě]re ouroklъ: "***Ne daite Savě ni odinogo pescja xotja na nixъ. Emati samъ vъ tomь***." A vъ [t]omь mi sja ne ispravilъ vъ borzě ni kъ vamъ ni [t]ou ti bylъ. A vъ tomь esmь ostalъ [...]

'From Sava greetings to [my] brethren and companions. The people have left me, although they were supposed to collect the rest of the tribute before autumn and send it as soon as the road was passable, and go onward. But Zaxar'ja, having sent [a man], has declared on oath: "***Do not let Sava collect even a single fox-pelt from them. I myself am responsible for that***." And that is why he has not immediately afterwards settled accounts with me and has neither been with you, nor here. And therefore I have remained [...].'

N724 / 1160–1180 / DND, 350

In this example, in Collins's (2001, 66) terms, "the embedded segment has the same deictic orientation as the projected speech event." In other words, the referential frame of the segment of reported speech is the same as it was in the actual situation of utterance; but this means that it is different from that of the "ongoing speech event" (ibid.), i.e. the reporting speech event uttered by the present speaker (the letter's author). In indirect speech, Sava would have referred to himself in the first person, just like he does as the author of the framing narrative: *ostavili mja byli ljudьe* 'the people had left me'. In that case,

there would not have been a referential boundary. But now it is clear that the deictic orientation in the stretch of reported speech is shifted, i.e. it is oriented not to the perspective of the present speaker (Sava), but to that of the reported speaker, in this case Zaxar'ja, so that we have a clear instance of direct speech. The mentioning of the name Sava leaves it even less ambiguous.

In this particular case, we have another very clear indicator, which shows that sometimes certain additional diagnostic criteria can play a role. The presence of an imperative in a stretch of reported speech is an unambiguous detector of direct speech (and, indeed, a frequently encountered construction in the instances of direct speech in the corpus). The imperative precludes an interpretation along the lines of indirect speech, which would necessitate a slightly more laborious rendering of this proposition, e.g. with a complementizer such as *ati* or the subjunctive *čto by* (cf. § 6.7).

Another, even more explicit "detective" clue can be the use of a vocative:

(43) [...] Ot Esifa k Ъnfima. Čtъ prišle ot Markъ k tobě ljudii Olьksa, ili kъ žene mъjei, otvěcai jemu takъ: "Kakъ esi dokončalъ, ***Marke-voc***, sъ mnъju, mně vyjexati Petrъvo dne k tobě i rosmъtriti sьla svojegъ; tъbě rъže svъja snjati, a mně naklady tvoje dati. A istina dana." [...]

'From Jesif to Onfim. If Oleksa will send people from Mark to you or to my wife, answer him as follows: "As you, ***Mark***, have arranged with me, I have to come out to you on St. Peter's day and inspect my village; you have to harvest your rye, and I have to give your interest. And the debt has been given." [...]'

N142 / 1300–1320 / DND, 536

Thus, in spite of our lack of knowledge of the context, we can still be guided by additional criteria to determine the main criterion, viz. a deictic shift. If a vocative is present, it must be an indicator of direct speech. It makes up for the ambiguity that often accompanies direct speech by way of the greatest possible explicitness about the identity of the addressee of the stretch of reported speech. This makes the example unambiguous, even for unsolicited "overreaders" like we are.[4] The only thing that remains to be deduced from the context is the exact position of the closing referential boundary, i.e. where the

4 Compare this to the imperative subject in overtly communicatively heterogeneous texts. In those cases we also see a referential boundary (contrast), plus an explicit statement about the nature of that contrast, i.e. speaker selection (cf. § 5.3).

report ends. In some cases, determining the strategy is more problematic. More about this issue will be voiced in § 6.4.5 below.

(44) O Sьmnounьe kъ Igoučьkou. Čьja ti estь korova da molovi emou: "***Ožь xočьši korovь a edeši po korovou a vьzi tri grivьnь***."

'From Semnun's wife to Igučko. Say to him, whose the cow is: "***If you want the cow and come for the cow, bring three grivnas***."'

N8 / 1180–1200 / DND, 434

Here is another example of the instructive type. It is clear that the second person in *ožь xočьši korovь* 'if you want the cow' is aimed at the cow's owner,[5] whereas the second person in the reporting speech event is the letter's addressee, viz. Igučka.

Finally, all occurrences of direct speech in the birchbark corpus are presented in Table 7.

6.4.2 *Indirect Speech*

Let us now look at an example of indirect speech:

(45) Ot Mirslava k Olisьevi ko Gricinou. A tou ti vъnidьte Gavъko Polocanino. Prašai ego ***kodь ti na gospodь vitaetь***. Atь ti vidьlo kako ti bylo ja Ivana jalъ, postavi i pьredъ ljudmi kako ti vzmolovitь.

'From Mirslav to Olisej Grečin. Gavko, a resident of Polotsk, is coming. Ask him ***where he is lodging***. If he has seen how I arrested Ivan, place him before the witnesses that he mentions.'

N502 / 1180–1200 / DND, 405

As can be seen, the deictic organization remains unchanged, i.e. it is the same in the stretch of reported speech as in the surrounding authorial frame. The referential perspective of the reporter (Mirslav) instead of the reported speaker (Olisej Grečin) is taken. Note that this is an instance of the instructive type, so that the term reported speaker is not entirely adequate here, but for reasons of uniformity we shall stick to this terminology. Mirslav formulates a question to

5 This may seem slightly strange, but in the edition (DND: 435) a scenario is proposed in which it is assumed that the cow has escaped and inflicted damage, in compensation of which the owner now has to pay before he can get the cow back. The only strange thing that would remain is that the amount is so high (ibid.).

TABLE 7 *Direct speech*[6]

№	Date	Tag	Type
N954	1100–1120	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N877/527	1120–1140	*zapiratisja* 'deny'	Narr.
N952	1140–1160	*molviti* 'say'	Narr.
N665	1160–1180	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N724	1160–1180	*ureči* 'determine'	Narr.
N731	1160–1180	*molviti* 'say'	Narr.
N794	1160–1180	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
St.R.11	1160–1180	*molviti* 'say'	Narr.
N8	1180–1200	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N550	1180–1200	*molviti* 'say'	Narr.
St.R.30	1180–1200	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N531 (4×)	1200–1220	*izvětati* 'accuse', *molviti* 'say' (2×), *vzmolviti* 'say'	Instr.
St.R.43	1280–1300	*reči* 'say'	Narr.
N142	1300–1320	*otvěčati* 'answer'	Instr.
N344	1300–1320	*prikazati* 'order'	Narr.
N3 (2×)	1360–1380	*otvěčati* 'answer', *prislati* 'order to be said; lit. send'	Narr.
N697	1360–1380	*reči* 'say'	Narr.
N755	1420–1430	*vosprositi* 'ask'	Narr.
N962 (2×)	15th cent.	*molviti* 'say', *povestovati* 'speak'	Narr.

Gavko which Olisej Grečin is supposed to ask him upon receipt of the letter. But still, Mirslav takes his own, and not Olisej's (the prospective or potential speaker's), vantage point, as in the latter case the instruction would have sounded "Ask him: "Where are you lodging?"". Thus, we are clearly dealing with an instance of indirect speech.

Interestingly, almost all instances of indirect speech in the birchbark corpus are of the "instructive" kind (cf. Table 8 below); one letter may constitute an exception, though a marginal one, hinging on one reflexive possessive pronoun:

6 Some birchbark letters have more than one instance of reported speech; if more than one speech reporting strategy is used, the same birchbark letter appears in more than one table (e.g. N755, which is also present in Tables 9 and 10 below).

(46) Ot Oleksěja ko Gavrilě. Reklъ jesi bylъ ***vo svojemь selě verši vsě dobry i jaraja žita*** [...].

'From Oleksej to Gavrila. You had said [that] ***in your-REFL village the grain-crops are all good and the spring barley*** [...].'

N195 / 1300–1320 / DND, 525

The absence of a complementizer (cf. the optional addition of *that* in the English translation) is not significant here. As Collins (2001, 11) points out, the presence of a complementizer is often erroneously taken as a syntactic criterion for the category of indirect speech (although the vast majority of the instances of indirect speech on birchbark have a complementizer (such as *ati, datь, oti, cto by*), which can, therefore, be considered a typical feature). What is more telling is that the deictic orientation of the current speaker (Oleksej) is taken; the indicator for this is the reflexive possessive pronoun *svojemь*, which is always coreferential with the subject of the main clause, in this case the second person singular (encoded in the copula *jesi* 'be-PRES.2SG'). If the deictic orientation of the reported speaker (in this case, by the way, coinciding with the addressee) were taken, the stretch of (direct) reported speech would have read ***v mojemь*** *selě* [etc.] 'in ***my*** village [etc.]'.[7]

Note that verb tense is not particularly relevant in Old Russian in this respect, either (just like in present-day Russian, for that matter), because a report is not usually "backshifted", but rather tends to be phrased in the tense used by the source speaker, be it in direct or indirect reported speech (cf. Collins 1996, 30; 2001, 11).

Finally, a table is presented here with the instances of indirect speech in the birchbark corpus. It is interesting to take note of the distribution of the types of reported speech, i.e. the massive predominance of the instructive type, which is so obvious that it can hardly be coincidental. The reason for this may be that it avoids confusion between the identity of the letter's addressee and the addressee of the instructive report (cf. § 6.8).

7 It may also be argued that this is actually an instance of an NRSA (see § 6.4.3). Cf. DND: 526, where the report is treated as a double accusative construction, and thus syntactically subordinate to the verb.

TABLE 8 *Indirect speech*

№	Date	Tag	Type
N999	12th cent.	*poveléti* 'order'	Instr.
St.R.7	1140–1160	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N798	1160–1180	*poveléti* 'order'	Instr.
N502	1180–1200	*prašati* 'ask'	Instr.
Torž.13	1180–1200	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N346	1280–1300	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N195	1300–1320	*reči* 'say'	Narr.
N5	1320–1340	*molviti* 'say'	Instr.
N354 (2×)	1340–1360	*molitisja* 'entreat' (2×)	Instr.
N25	1400–1410	*slatisja* 'refer'	Instr.

6.4.3 *Narrative Reports of Speech Acts*

So far, we have been talking in terms of an opposition, viz. direct versus indirect reported speech. The system of person deixis contains their respective symptoms. While not denying the appeal of this simple dichotomy, there is more to be said about speech reporting strategies.

(47) ***He*** promised to visit ***her*** again.
LEECH & SHORT 1981, 324

On the one hand, this sentence fits into the dichotomy. Assuming that the original utterance was something to the effect of "I will visit you again", we can see that the deictic frame of the original utterance is not taken over here. Rather, the deictics of the surrounding narrative frame are also used in the stretch of reported speech: cf. *he* and *her*. In Collins's terms, the deictic expressions are transparent; there is no switch of referential perspective between the reported speech and the reporting frame.

However, what distinguishes this example from the category of indirect speech is that the reporting strategy in (47) syntactically integrates the stretch of reported speech into the reporting narrative by grammatical subordination. Thus, apart from the basic distinction as to deictics, this sentence shows another characteristic, which sets it apart from indirect speech as such. The reporting strategy used in (47) is termed "**narrative report of speech act**" (NRSA) (Leech & Short 1981, 323). It "condenses" the reported utterance into a single subordinated phrase or even a single word.

Nevertheless, the basic criterion of transparent deictics would group it along with indirect speech. This shows that the basic dichotomy has to be refined in order to incorporate strategies other than the two basic ones. We shall deal with this issue below.[8]

A typical NRSA in the birchbark corpus contains a tag followed by an infinitive, plus a possible complement, as in the following narrative example with *vъzjati* 'take-INF':

(48) + Ot Dobrošьkě kъ Prokъšě. Prisъli mi grivьnou: a Davydъ ti mi ne vъdalъ; velitь ***vъzjati ou vežьnikъ***.

'+ From Dobroška to Prokša. Send me a grivna: David has not given [it] to me; he orders ***to take*** [***it***] ***from the fishermen***.'

N664 / 1160–1180 / DND, 365, NGB XII, 256

This type of reporting does not have to be of the narrative type, but can equally (though rarely attested on birchbark—only thrice—cf. Table 9) be "instructive":

(49) Čelomъ bitije k ogži mtri ot Onsifora. Veli Nesterju ***rublь skopiti da iti k Ijuriju k sukladniku***. [...]

'A request to madam, mother, from Onsifor. Order Nester to get a rouble together and to go to Jurij, the business associate. [...]'

N354 / 1340–1360 / DND, 550

The report can even be reduced to a mere noun phrase:

8 The existence of narrative reports of speech acts as a separate speech reporting strategy might be questioned, in view of the fact that the deictic criterion groups it together with indirect speech. Why should syntactic considerations suddenly be relevant here, whereas it has just been stated that deixis is the only universally reliable diagnostic criterion for distinguishing speech reporting categories? As will be argued below, NRSA can be seen as a subtype of indirect speech, making it less ambiguous, not only by stable deictics (as is also the case in indirect speech), but also by the impossibility of a deictic shift due to the NRSA's syntactic subordination. In the light of our further discussion, this distinction will turn out to be fruitful (cf. § 6.7.1.3). Thus, the basic opposition comes to light through the deictic criterion, while further refinements are attained by way of additional, complementary criteria.

(50) Ot Rьmьšě poklanjanьe kъ Klimjatě i kъ Pavlou. B[oga] dělja kotorei ljubo potroudisja do vladyčě. Sъkažita vladyčě ***moju obidou i moi boi želěza***. A ja emou ne dъlъžьne ničimъ že. I molju va sja.

'Greetings from Remša to Klimjata and Pavel. For God's sake let anyone [of you two] go to the archbishop. Tell the archbishop [about] ***my shame and my beating*** [***and***] ***chains***. And I owe him nothing. And I entreat you [both].'

N725 / 1180–1200 / DND, 415

Some doubts might arise as to the status of this construction, but Coulmas (1986, 20) argues that similar instances should be analysed as reported speech:

> It may seem far-fetched to subsume sentences such as these under the notion of reported speech, but notice that they share some crucial features with indirect speech: There is a report verb and a "propositional" part. The latter is syntactically reduced to a noun phrase in object position, but then this is exactly the position that a complement sentence occupies.

We shall thus take it to be an instance of an NRSA. A slightly less typical structure is an NRSA with a participial construction (attested on birchbark only twice, viz. in N550 and N1020, both with the verb *tvoritisja* 'claim' and the active past participle). Take a look at N550:

(51) [...] A vъžniki tvorjatesja ***vъdavoše-P.PTC.M.NOM.PL Sobyslavou cetyri grivne, a posьliščenyxo 15 grivno***. [...]

'[...] And the fishermen claim ***to have given four grivnas to Sbyslav, and of the settlement tax 15 grivnas***. [...].'

N550 / 1180–1200 / DND, 401; NGB XII, 250

In order to provide a clear overview, a table will now be shown which presents all instances of NRSAs on birchbark (as is done with the other strategies, too), ordered chronologically. The third column indicates the verbal tag that is used (cited here in the infinitive), with a rough English translation. Needless to say, these English translations are only approximate and do not capture all subtleties and shades of meaning, but they might serve to give a rough impression. The fourth column shows whether the example belongs to the narrative or instructive type.

TABLE 9 *Narrative reports of speech acts*

№	Date	Tag	Type
N1005	12th cent.	*prositi* 'ask, request'	Narr.
N877/572 (2×)	1120–1140	*velěti* 'order' (2×)	Narr.
(N879)	1120–1140	*reči* 'say'	Narr.
N664	1160–1180	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.
N672	1160–1180	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.
N550	1180–1200	*tvoritisja* 'assert'	Narr.
N725	1180–1200	*skazati* 'say'	Instr.
N482 (2×)	1280–1300	*poveléti* 'order', *tvoritisja* 'assert'	Narr.
N102	1340–1360	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.
N354	1340–1360	*velěti* 'order'	Instr.
N415	1340–1360	*velěti* 'order'	n/a
N275/266	1360–1380	*velěti* 'order'	Instr.
N406	1360–1380	*prošati* 'ask, request'	Narr.
N697	1360–1380	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.
N314	1380–1400	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.
N754	1380–1400	*poveléti* 'order'	Narr.
N157 (2×)	1410–1420	*velěti* 'order' (2×)	Narr.
N242	1420–1430	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.
N755	1420–1430	*velěti* 'order'	Narr.

6.4.4 *Free Direct Speech*

Now that we have seen three speech reporting strategies, we have to deal with two more. What the above examples all have in common, is that the stretch of reported speech is explicitly introduced by a tag, or *verbum dicendi*, such as *said* (39–40) or *promised* (47). Two other speech reporting strategies can be distinguished, whose only difference from, respectively, direct and indirect speech is the lack of such a tag. Thus, "**free direct speech**" is the same as direct speech (i.e. shifted deictics), but without an explicit signal that it is reported speech:

(52) 'He's drunk now', he said.
'He's drunk every night.'
'What did he want to kill himself for?'
'How should I know.'
'How did he do it?'

> ***'He hung himself with a rope.'***
> ***'Who cut him down?'***
>
> ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, as cited in LEECH & SHORT 1981, 322

The first line of (52) is ordinary direct speech, signalled by "he said". The following lines, however, lack such a tag, while the referential organization is the same as in the original utterances, and are thus free direct speech. Still, the graphical cue of inverted commas is there. It is only left implicit to whom the reported clause should be attributed (not the fact that it is reported speech in the first place). The identity of the utterer of each subsequent sentence is assured by the sequence of "adjacency pairs" (Brown & Yule 1983, 230).

The category of free direct speech occurs relatively infrequently on birch-bark. So far, four instances of this type have been identified, two of which (N154 and N697) were already acknowledged in the edition, and two (N755 and Tv.5) were reinterpreted as containing free direct speech by Gippius & Schaeken (2011). Consider the following example:

(53) Ot Iliice ko Ilie. Šjuiga dubie perepisyvaete a bcely ti lazilo: "***Jazo dubie otimaju po svoei meti.***" Ate eno sotesyvaete: "***To moi dubo. Vaše bortiko okralosja pervy.***" A nyne poedi samo semo, utverdi svoju borte.

'From Ilijca to Il'ja. Šujga is overwriting [the marks on] the oaks and has taken out the honey from the hives, [*saying*:] "***I am taking away the oaks on my own mark***". He is cutting away the cut-mark, [*saying*:] "***It is my oak. Your former beekeeper has fallen into robbery***". And now come here yourself; confirm your [ownership of the] bee-yard.'

Tv.5 / 1300–1320 / DND, 569[9]

In spite of the absence of any formal markers of speech reporting, Gippius & Schaeken (2011) convincingly show that the only way in which the letter can be plausibly interpreted is by positing the presence of two pieces of direct reported speech. They show this by conducting a pragmaphilological analysis, taking into account the situation and context of the letter. This approach already hints at the fact that the letter can only be correctly understood if one

9 The translation is based on Gippius & Schaeken (2011: 18), while taking into account a subsequent correction by Gippius (NGB XII: 274).

has recourse to its background and context. Thus, the letter's addressee would have had no problem at all to infer its polyphonic nature. This is a crucial point to which we shall return below.

(54) [...] Čto este mně veléli ou Putila konь vzjati, · inъ mně ne dastь. · "***Ne vinovatъ · esmь · Kuzmě***." · A ešče mene zazva(lъ) ---rodъ · a rka · takъ za toboju · xlěbъ · moi · i ži(vo)tъ · věsь. [...]

'[...] Regarding the fact that you have ordered me to take a horse from Putil, he does not give it to me: "***I owe nothing to Kuz'ma***." And ... rod has also called me, saying: "for you is my bread and all my belongings." [...]'

N697 / 1360–1380 / DND, 576

(55) [Inside:] Vosprosilě pravišči̇kě Omanta rostjagalesь Fipe s Yvanomъ Stoikomъ. "***Videle jesmь i cjule promeži Filipomъ Ivanomъ. Dale Filipe Stoiku 3 rublě serebromъ i 7 grivenъ kunъ i konь***." A uvědajetsja Stoike v viri i s posadnikomъ i s sočkymi. A to sja dijalosь sedně vo veliki dn̄ь.
[Outside:] A to dijalosь na pogostě na torgě.

[Inside:] 'The court officers have interrogated Omant [about the fact that] Filipp started a lawsuit against Ivan Stojko. [Omant said:] "***I have seen and heard*** [***what happened***] ***between Filipp and Ivan. Filipp gave three silver roubles and 7 grivnas kun and a horse to Stojko***." [Now] Stojko is going to deal with the matter under oath with the governor and the centurions. And this happened today at Easter.'
[Outside:] 'And this happened in the district, on the market.'

N154 / 1420–1430 / DND, 672

(56) Tolko za mnoju i slovъ. Pozvale mene Olekьsěi na gumno, ažь Ostašьka ovydь moloti. Olekъsěi [jeg]o vosprosi: "Comu molotišь bezъ našixъ sirotъ? A namъ v zemlě polovina a verьši castь." "***I velělъ mi starěšěi moi i sěmjana i ěmjana molotitь vaša***", Ivane.

'I only have to say this. Oleksej has called me to the threshing-floor because Ostaška was threshing the spring rye. Oleksej asked him: "Why are you threshing without our farmers? Half of the land and part of the grain is ours." [Ostaška answered:] "***My boss has ordered me to thresh all your grain*** (lit. your grain for sowing and for consumption)", [i.e.] Ivan.'

N755 / 1420–1430 / DND, 636; NGB XII, 269–270

TABLE 10 *Free direct speech*

№	Date	Type
Tv.5	1300–1320	Narr.
N697	1360–1380	Narr.
N154	1420–1430	Narr.
N755	1420–1430	Narr.

All four occurrences of free direct speech on birchbark are situated in the later period (cf. Table 10). We shall return to this somewhat surprising chronological distribution in § 6.9.

Finally, for completeness's sake, there is **"free indirect speech"**, which involves indirect speech without a tag. It is often mentioned in literary studies, as widely occurring in fictional prose. It does not seem to be covered in the birchbark corpus, but we shall encounter it in the theoretical discussion of § 6.6.

6.4.5 *Undecided Cases*

A limited number of instances of reported speech simply lack any deictic expressions whatsoever; as deictics are the only criterion for classifying them as either direct or indirect speech, these instances have to remain unclassified.

(57) [...] zděse, ospodo, javljajutsja rukupisanie lživyja. A perepě{sysy}syvajutь vašь Netrebui dějakъ pozovnici i rukopěsania lživyja. A tvorjatьsja ***pečatale Iva Parfě rukusani{ue}ja***. A xrěstьjanu vašь vamъ, svoei ospodi, čolomъ běju.

'[...] here also, lords, there are false testaments showing up. And your Netrebuj [and] the clerk copy false summonses and testaments. And they claim [that] ***Ivan Parfeev has put his seal on the testaments***. And your peasants petition you, our lords.'

N307 / 1420–1430 / DND, 678

Intuitively, one might say that this is most likely to be indirect speech, but there are no decisive clues in the text. The only reference in the stretch of reported speech is to a third-person side participant, and thus no deictic elements are available that refer to speech act participants.

Although the definition of the deictic orientation point seems to be sufficient to encompass all aspects that are needed to classify reported speech into

the two basic categories, this does not mean that every instance of reported speech in the birchbark corpus is crystal clear as to its classification. Especially when parts of the letter are damaged or missing, as in the following example:

(58) [...] i ty uxo položi na sudě. A na mene se šli na tomъ cto ***esi konь poznalъ u němcina i uxo esi za mene dale***, *i němcine za sebe povodъ složile, a veg*[*lese na V*]*iguja*. [...]

'[...] then you give-IMP testimony in court. And refer to me in that ***you have recognized the horse at the German and you have given testimony for me***, *but the German has rejected the accusation, and accused Viguj*. [...].'

N25 / 1400–1410 / DND, 658

Due to the lack of context, it is not entirely clear whether the last phrases (marked by non-bold italics) also form part of the embedded reported speech, or whether they belong to the embedding narrative. It seems most plausible to include them into the stretch of reported speech, but in the absence of deictic markers we cannot determine this formally.

There are some more reasons why certain instances of speech reporting are somewhat shrouded in clouds of mystery. When considering the next example, the question will arise: is the section in bold italics an instance of direct speech, free direct speech, or is it not reported speech at all?

(59) Poklono ot [...] jesi {velile} velile verše imati, tvorjace i vinovati, odinu tri koroběi ouv Yvanka ouzjale. Starosta Oleskandrova pogosta bějetь celomь, ***sto by jesi, gospodine, okupile ixъ i slovo položile so mnoju***. [...]

'Greetings from [...]. You have ordered to take bread, having announced them [to be] debtors, one [shipment of] three baskets [he] has taken from Ivanko. The elder of the Oleksandrov district bows before you, ***may you, lord, redeem them and make an arrangement with me***. [...].'

N102 / 1340–1360 / DND, 555

As Collins (2001, 83) shows, the expression *biti čelomъ* 'bow down, lit. beat the brow' can function as a tag in Old Russian, introducing direct speech. However, it does not have to fulfill that function; it can also be an ordinary greeting or politeness formula. The subjunctive construction with *čto by* can indeed occur in indirect speech (N354), but it often occurs in non-reported speech, too. In the absence of contextual knowledge, it is hard to define this letter's referential organization. This is a typical symptom of the context-bound, "immediate"

character of many of the birchbark letters, which points to the crucial role of contextual knowledge. Similar problems arise when analyzing example (60), which we have encountered already as (50):

(60) Ot Rьmьšě poklanjanье kъ Klimjatě i kъ Pavlou. B̋ dělja kotorei ljubo potroudisja do vladyčě. Sъkažita vladyčě moju obidou i moi boi železa. ***A ja emou ne dъlъžьne ničimъ že***. I molju va sja.

'Greetings from Remša to Klimjata and Pavel. For God's sake let anyone [of you two] go to the archbishop. Tell the archbishop [about] my shame and my beating and chains. ***And I owe him nothing***. And I entreat you [both].'

N725 / 1180–1200 / DND, 415

Is the part in bold italics an explanation to Klimjata and Pavel, as to why they should tell the archbishop about Remša's shame and beating and chains, or is it the continuation of what they should say to the archbishop, rendered in indirect speech? These interpretational difficulties testify to a large measure of context-dependence of these birchbark letters, an issue to which more attention will be devoted in § 6.7.3.

6.5 Diachronic Considerations

Now that the distribution of instances of reported speech has been conveniently arranged in tables, it is appropriate to devote a few words to their chronological order—or rather, to see whether any order can be detected in the birchbark corpus, and what the consequences might be for our considerations about orality and literacy. Ideally, the number of instances of each speech reporting category should be marked out against the total number of instances of reported speech in time intervals that are as short as possible. Due to the limited size of the corpus, however, whole centuries have been taken into account.

Lopatina (1979, 446) asserts that indirect speech in Old Russian still bears the traces of direct speech, which she apparently looks upon as a more basic category:

> Конструкция косвенной речи, по-видимому, на протяжении всего рассматриваемого периода находилась в стадии развития и испытывала влияние конструкции прямой речи.

> The construction of indirect speech apparently found itself in a stage of development and was under the influence of the construction of direct speech during the entire period in question.

This influence is, however, not due to a chronological primacy of direct speech, but rather, among other things, to the pervasive influences of orality, by which reporting strategies are also affected (we shall enlarge on this issue in § 6.7). Untenable claims are sometimes made about the chronology of speech reporting strategies. Apart from positing the distinction between direct and indirect speech on the syntactic level, Kolesov (2009, 494) also claims that indirect speech developed later than direct speech: "Косвенная речь развивается позже прямой одновременно с развитием гипотаксиса" 'Indirect speech develops later than direct speech, simultaneously with the development of hypotaxis'. That this claim is, to say the very least, not supported by the birchbark data becomes clear from the fact that indirect speech is attested from the very beginning of the period.

Collins (2001, 191) observes "a drift from direct to indirect style" in his corpus of Old Russian legal texts. Figures 5 and 6 show that the birchbark corpus also shows a decline in the use of of direct speech. Indirect speech, on the other hand, is distributed more or less evenly throughout the period. Narrative reports of speech acts see a slight increase. In Figure 5, the number of birchbark letters showing a certain speech reporting strategy is presented as a percentage of the total number of birchbark letters, grouped per century. In Figure 6, the instances of speech reporting are presented as a percentage of the total number of occurrences of each strategy per century. In Table 11, the absolute numbers are presented. Note that the four occurrences of free direct speech have not been included here (cf. § 6.4.4. and § 6.9).

The state of affairs which is represented in Figures 5 and 6 needs an explanation. Crucially, we should not only look at the sheer number of occurrences, but also take into account the *functions* of the various strategies. The speech reporting strategies may be connected to theoretical notions of orality and literacy, but the actual language users employed each strategy with a certain practical, communicative purpose, be it intentional or not (§ 6.8). It is not as if it were a "diachronic competition between synonymous categories" (Collins 1996, 23). These considerations would thwart any broad claims about the connection between diachronic developments in the use of speech reporting strategies and the orality-literacy continuum.

Secondly, the relatively small size of the corpus would prevent us, again, from drawing too radical a conclusion on the basis of these data. The general impression, however, remains one of relative conformity to the expected rule of

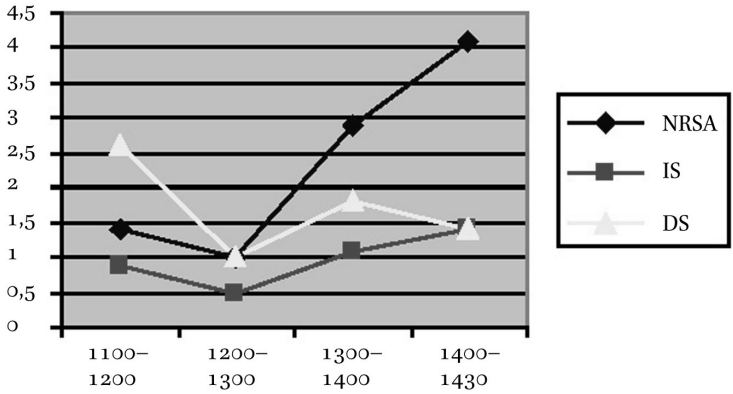

FIGURE 5 *Strategies, in % of total amount of letters in each period*

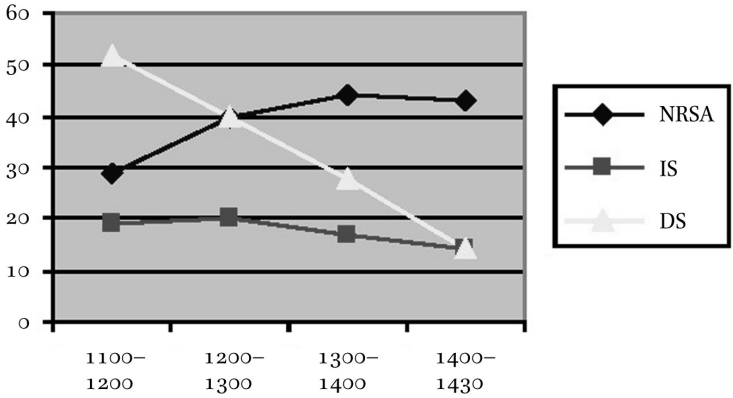

FIGURE 6 *Strategies, in % of instances of speech reporting in each period*

thumb, viz. that the use of speech reporting strategies increasingly conforms to a "literate" mindset. In what way the strategies can be linked to orality or literacy will be explained in the following subsections.

6.6 Speech Reporting Strategies on a Scale

Having distinguished among five speech reporting strategies, and having observed their distribution throughout the birchbark corpus, we can now proceed to delineate how these strategies relate to each other. The idea of a strict dichotomy (direct vs. indirect speech) has to be embedded into a scale of reported speech categories (based on Leech & Short 1981, 324). This scale is presented in (61), with a key to the abbreviations.

TABLE 11 *Strategies, in absolute numbers*[10]

Period	NRSA	IS	DS	Reports	Overall number of birchbark letters
1100–1200	6	4	11	21	431
1200–1300	2	1	2	5	199
1300–1400	8	3	5	18	273
1400–1430	11	4	6	25	73

(61) NRSA IS FIS | DS FDS

NRSA Narrative report of speech act
IS Indirect speech
FIS Free indirect speech
DS Direct speech
FDS Free direct speech
| boundary of the basic dichotomy between indirect and direct speech (see below)

The examples put forward above have shown us that there is a strict dichotomy (direct vs. indirect reported speech), with a strict diagnostic criterion (shifted vs. transparent deictics). We shall call this the "basic dichotomy". Neither Coulmas (1986) nor any of the authors in his edited volume seem to make use of the full range of terms developed by Leech & Short (1981). They seem to be exclusively concerned with the basic dichotomy, as is also shown by the title of the volume (*Direct and Indirect Speech*). But the two opposites of this dichotomy are part of a larger scale (although they are not the two extremities of this scale!).

Now, what constitutes the essence of this scale? In other words, what is the criterion for placement on the scale? Leech & Short (1981, 324) call it a "cline of 'interference' in report",[11] i.e. it denotes the degree to which the

10 All birchbark letters have been taken into consideration insofar as they are dated and have enough content for investigation. Birchbark letters from before 1100 and after 1430 happen not to show any instances of speech reporting.

11 The term "cline" is, in my view, not the most optimal one; it implies that the various strategies are situated on a gradual continuum. However, the strategies can be distinguished from each other by strict criteria (there are no intermediate forms), so that is more appropriate to speak of a "scale".

author (i.e. the reporter) interferes with the interpretation of the stretch of reported speech. In Clark's (1996) terms (cf. § 2.3), the question would be: to what extent is it a joint project, in which the author aims at a jointly negotiated interpretation in cooperation with the reader, or, conversely, to what extent does the author interfere and claim dominance over the reader's interpretative options? If the author claims dominance, the report is "compact" (Collins 2001, 288), i.e. "integrated" into the authorial discourse; if the author leaves more responsibility to the reader, the report is "diffuse" (ibid.), i.e. standing out from the authorial discourse. Let us now "tread" along the scale and discuss each strategy separately.

Narrative reports of speech acts, at the leftmost end, are the least situated variety; no confusion is likely to arise over the question to whom the referential expressions refer, as all this information is linguistically encoded by means of syntax—it is one and the same clause, which implies that a switch of referential perspective is impossible. Plank (1986, 305) also points at the correlation between integration and the uniformity of deictic references: a shift cannot possibly occur, and thus a wrong referent cannot be assigned to the deictic expressions.[12] Consequently, this strategy is potentially unambiguous: the author can be pretty sure that the addressee will interpret the utterance exactly as it was intended. Leech & Short (1981, 324) classify this strategy under "[n]arrator [i.e. author] apparently in total control of report".

With the other, less integrated, varieties of reported speech, a switch of referential perspective is grammatically possible, and the situation or context is to be relied on (to varying degrees) in order to determine whether or not such a shift has indeed occurred.

The next variety, indirect speech, is also characterized by relative compactness. There is no shift of deictic expressions or referential perspective, so that one does not have to lean on any clues outside of the text as to whose perspective is taken, as it simply remains constant (transparent). What makes indirect speech slightly more diffuse than narrative reports of speech acts, however, is

12 This is the connection between deixis and syntactic integration. "Je schwächer Redeanführung und wiedergegebene Rede syntaktisch miteinander integriert sind, desto eher können ihre deiktischen Bezugsrahmen wechseln; je stärker ihre Integration, desto uniformer die deiktischen Bezüge" 'The weaker reporting and reported speech are syntactically integrated, the sooner their deictic reference frames can switch; the stronger their integration, the more uniform the deictic references' (Plank 1986: 305). Cf. Chafe's (1982) term "integration" as opposed to "detachment".

the fact that the *possibility* of a perspectival shift is now grammatically open.[13] Indirect speech is often treated as being more complex than direct speech, but, as Collins (1996, 66) points out, the referential strategies which are used are actually simpler, because they remain stable.

In free indirect speech, the referential perspective remains the same as in the surrounding frame, so that the context is to be relied on to distinguish the reported speech from the reporting frame. This is already a characteristic of diffuseness.[14]

Direct speech is also well on its way to the diffuse end of the spectrum, because, as we have seen, the boundary between authorial frame and reported speech involves an abrupt shift in referential perspective. Still, the authorial frame provides some clue as to the existence of this boundary, usually with a tag (*verbum dicendi*). Thus, the presence of reported speech is made explicit, but not its referential orientation; the latter has to be deduced from the situation. The three middlemost categories (IS, FIS, DS) are, then, labelled by Leech & Short (1981, 324) as "[n]arrator apparently under partial control of report".

Free direct speech, at the rightmost end, is the most situated category; to grasp its referential meaning, even more recourse to the situation is required than in the case of direct speech. After all, the referential perspective is shifted,

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13 Such a shift can, by the way, only occur in the third person in indirect speech. To return to example (40), it is possible to interpret it in such a way that it is not John who was tired, but another third person: "John$_x$ said that he$_y$ was tired".

14 One might be inclined to argue that free indirect speech is actually the most diffuse variety and should be placed at the rightmost edge of the continuum. Firstly, the boundaries are not marked, and secondly, not even a deictic shift can be relied on to determine these boundaries. As Collins (2001: 135) notes, there is "ambiguity between [free indirect speech] and narrative". One could also stretch the definition of free indirect speech beyond that which is common in literary studies, as Collins (2001: 142 ff.) seems to do, and include instances where reported information is presented just like the rest of the narrative. On birchbark, this would lead to examples of the following kind: *Zdeso Filist jexatь xoce* 'Here Filist wants to go' (N19); *None, ospodine, Oleksii ne xoce namъ rzy dati* 'So, lord, Oleksii does not want to give us rye' (N310). These statements are evidently the result of an earlier speech act, uttered by Filist and Oleksii, but they are not an explicit rendition of their utterance by way of a speech act verb. However, even if one considers these instances to be free indirect speech, they are often hard to distinguish from ordinary narrative (though the above examples have a clear indicator, viz. *xoce* 'wants'), in view of the "bad data problem" in historical texts. For this reason, a more extensive discussion of this issue is not thought to be particularly appropriate and useful here.

and in addition, there is no textual clue about where the boundary lies between authorial frame and reported speech. For our topic, free direct speech is also the most interesting category, as it provides us with language use of a clearly oral nature; we shall come back to this point in § 6.9 below.

Thus, the above continuum reflects a scale with values ranging from compact to diffuse (cf. Collins 2001, 289). That is to say, on the one hand (the compact end of the scale) there is maximal authorial *interference*, which means that the letter's author remains in maximum control of the interpretation; he "steers" the addressee as much as possible towards a felicitous interpretation of the meaning he intends to convey. On the other hand (the diffuse end of the spectrum), there is maximal situational *inference*, i.e. the author leaves as much liberty in the interpretation process as possible to the addressee, who has to make sense of implicit clues from their common ground or physical surroundings (in which the letter-bearer or messenger may play a significant role—cf. § 6.7.3 and § 6.9 below for more on this topic).

As Semino, Short & Culpeper (1997, 33) note, "some distinctions on the cline are harder-edged than others. [...] the boundary between the direct and free indirect categories is not really clinal". In their corpus, there is never any ambiguity between free indirect speech and direct speech. This underlines the validity of maintaining the basic dichotomy between direct and indirect speech, indicated in (61) by the vertical line between FIS and DS. The strategies to the left belong to indirect speech (judging by the deictic criterion), the strategies to the right of the line belong to direct speech. The dividing line does, however, not indicate an abrupt shift in authorial interference. The strategies can, therefore, still be presented on a scale. Thus, (61) reflects two approaches: on the one hand the classificatory dichotomy, which divides the strategies in twain according to their most salient characteristic (deictic orientation), and on the other hand the scale of authorial interference, which presents the strategies according to their main functional feature. These two aspects are not to be confused with each other.

6.7 Complexity and Context

Let us now dig a little bit deeper into the peculiarities and implications of the scale presented above, and discuss notions of complexity of formulation and interpretation, and further elaborate concepts of context-dependence. First of all, it should be noted that the proposed division into narrative and instructive reported speech somewhat complicates the way in which the scale should be treated. The scale concerns the extent to which the reporter manipulates

the reported utterance by conforming it to his own narrative perspective. But can an instructive utterance, which originates in the reporter himself, be said to be manipulated? It can be more or less controlled, but it is not the report of an actually pronounced utterance, as we have noted already. Furthermore, the extent of the author's intervention has consequences for the degree of complexity for both participants. In other words, the different strategies amount to varying degrees of complexity, not only for the author, but also for the reader. This adds another dimension to the discussion of the various strategies, which is, however, not necessarily expressed by the same scale, as will be shown below. To be more precise, authorial interference involves different degrees of planning burdens in the various strategies, as well as different degrees of the interpretative efforts the reader needs to invest in order to decode the message.[15] It is in this respect that the difference between narrative and instructive reported speech turns up again. Crucially, the factor that underlies the planning burden and interpretative effort is the measure of context-dependence of each strategy, as will be discussed towards the end of this section (§ 6.7.3).

6.7.1 *Complexity*

So we have seen that shifted deictics are more context-dependent. It now remains to be seen whether we can also say that a shifted perspective (diffuse strategy) is more complex and requires more *effort*, and if so, for whom (i.e. for the author or the reader, or both). Complexity has two sides: for the author and for the reader. It is closely connected to the degree of context-dependence. The amount of effort has to be described in the various strategies and types of speech reporting. We shall first devote some more attention to the statement that the planning burden differs for narrative and instructive reported speech. We shall take the basic direct-indirect dichotomy as a starting point for this discussion.

6.7.1.1 The Author's Effort

As was shown above, direct speech involves a referential shift. But to what extent is this a burdensome situation for the author? One might think that

15 The terms "Planungsaufwand" 'planning effort' and "Bürde der Dekodierung" 'decoding burden' are used by Voeste (2010: 969, 974), who borrowed the term "Bürde" from Plank (1986: 298). The term "Planungsaufwand" is used more widely in German academic discourse; interestingly enough, it seems to stem from Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985, 2011) model.

the deictic shift would make direct speech more difficult for the author to formulate. "Diese Sicht scheint mir jedoch die kognitiven Anforderungen des [...] Zitierens weit zu übertreiben." 'It seems to me, however, that this view greatly exaggerates the cognitive demands of [...] quotation' (Plank 1986, 298). In terms of the report's deictic orientation, the author does not have to change the deictics from his memory of the original speech act. For the author, the report is contextualized in a situation in the past.

In narrative indirect speech, the deictics of the report are the same as those of the reporting frame, but this means that they differ from those of the original speech act. According to Koch & Oesterreicher (2011, 78), "[d]ie integrative Anpassung des eingelassenen Diskurses an das deiktische Bezugssystem des übergeordneten Diskurses erfordert einen hohen Planungsaufwand" 'the integrative adaptation of the embedded discourse to the deictic reference system of the embedding discourse requires a high planning effort'. It should be noted, though, that this applies only in the case of *narrative* reported speech. With instructive reported speech the situation is reversed.

As far as the production by the reporter is concerned, a difference exists between narrative and instructive direct reported speech. The reporter either remembers a past utterance (though not necessarily verbatim!) or phrases one himself at that moment.

> Was bei der direkten Rede vom wiedergebenden Sprecher eigentlich ja nur zu leisten ist, ist, den Wortlaut möglichst getreu wiederzugeben; die Bürde, daraus den richtigen Sinn zu entnehmen, lastet am ehesten auf dem Adressaten der Redewiedergabe.
>
> PLANK 1986, 298

> The only thing that the reporter has to achieve in the case of direct speech is to reproduce the utterance as faithfully as possible; the burden of extracting the right sense from it rather rests with the addressee of the report.

Turning to instructive direct speech, it is obvious that the author has to adapt his own utterance to the referential perspective of the envisaged speech act to be pronounced in the future by the letter's addressee. The author has to put himself in the position of the addressee, and thus, from a displaced standpoint, formulate a message which is not yet tied to an actually existing context.

(62) [...] Ot Esifa k Ъnfima. Čtъ prišle ot Markъ k tobě ljudii Olьksa, ili kъ žene mъjei, otvěcai jemu takъ: "Kakъ esi dokončalъ, Marke-VOC, sъ mnъju,

> mně vyjexati Petrъvo dne k tobě i rosmъtriti sьla svojegъ; tъbě rъže svъja snjati, a mně naklady tvoje dati. A istina dana." [...]
>
> 'From Esif to Onfim. If Oleksa will send people from Mark to you or to my wife, answer him as follows: "As you, Mark, have arranged with me, I have to come out to you on St. Peter's day and inspect my village; you have to harvest your rye, and I have to give your interest. And the debt has been given." [...]'
>
> N142 / 1300–1320 / DND, 536

In this example, the second-person address of Mark is not burdensome for Esif; it does not involve a shift for him, as he would have used the same second-person forms if he were talking directly to Mark. But now that he inserts the intermediary of Onfim, the first-person forms are displaced: they refer not to Esif, but to Onfim, which involves making a referential shift for Esif. Alternatively, we can posit that Esif maintains his own perspective, in which case it is actually meant as a direct message from Esif to Mark, which Onfim was supposed to convey, or even read our aloud from the birchbark letter. It should then be interpreted as "answer him [in my name] as follows". This is quite probably the case for most instructive direct speech. In that case, there is no deictic shift from the author's point of view, but the addressee has to infer a shift. This makes instructive direct speech more difficult to process for the addressee, but not more difficult to produce for the author. Note that there is considerable overlap with the phenomenon of communicative heterogeneity here (one person gets a mandate to deliver a message to another person; more about which below).

There are not many instances of instructive direct speech containing first-person forms (N142, N531, N665), which, if the author indeed makes the switch towards the addressee's perspective, require the highest planning burden. Second-person forms occur a lot more often, but the author could have used these himself, too, when speaking to the intended addressee (which is less demanding than instructing someone else in a displaced perspective). In those cases, the intermediary status of the present addressee is less visible, and the authorial burden is less pressing; cf. example (62).

6.7.1.2 The Reader's Effort

As far as complexity for the reader is concerned, there are two factors that need to be taken into account: syntactic integration and deictic adaptation.

> Die syntaktische Integration und die deiktische Anpassung des eingelassenen Diskurses bei indirekter Rede signalisieren deutlich, wenn auch

> in planungsaufwendiger Weise, dass es sich um eine Redewiedergabe handelt. Bei der direkten Rede bedarf es demgegenüber anderer, sparsamerer Signale.
>
> KOCH & OESTERREICHER 2011, 79

> The syntactic integration and the deictic adaptation of the embedded discourse in the case of indirect speech signal clearly, although in a planning-intensive way, that we have to do with reported speech. In the case of direct speech other, scantier signals are needed.

Remember that in the case of old Russian, syntactic integration functions as a diagnostic criterion only for NRSAs (which underlines the usefulness of distinguishing this category). Deictic adaptation also occurs in indirect speech. As we have seen, in narrative indirect speech there is a switch for the author (he changes the original deictics into those of the report, i.e. adapts them to his own deictic perspective), but not for the reader (he just reads both the report and the frame in the same deictic perspective). It is, therefore, in the interest of the reader to use an integrated strategy, especially if the communication is "distant" (in the sense of the language of distance; cf. § 6.7.3).

Speaking theoretically, direct speech is generally more complex for the reader, since he has to infer the presence of a deictic shift. The deictic centre is displaced, so that it does not coincide with the author's origo. To put it in other words, the report is contextualized in either a past situation (narrative), the memory of which the reader does not necessarily share with the author, or a future situation (instructive) that is envisaged by the author, but not necessarily shared by the reader as yet. Thus, the reader has to make an effort in order to contextualize the report, not only into his own system of deictic orientation, but also to incorporate it into his common ground with the author. The author may give clues for the interpretation, such as the vocative (cf. § 6.4.1). In that case, the reader's interpretative burden is still fairly high, but it is somewhat mitigated, and the strategy serves a purpose. It best serves its goal of saliency (§ 6.8). Of course, the reader's "burden" can be lightened by the context, or more broadly, by common ground which the reader shares with the author. This is one of the main burdens of the present study.

So far, we have made observations that apply to the basic dichotomy of direct and indirect speech. It has become clear that stating one strategy in its entirety to be more complex (burdensome for the author as well as the addressee) than another would involve making a broader generalization than can be afforded. At the very least, the distinction between narrative and instructive reported speech should be taken into account. Thus, the interpretative burden

is the same, but the planning burden differs between narrative and instructive reported speech. This insight would mitigate claims made by Plank (1986).

6.7.1.3 Narrative Reports of Speech Acts

As far as narrative reports of speech acts are concerned, i.e. the most compact variety, marked by syntactic dependence, I would like to call attention to an observation made by Voeste (2010, 974):

> Eine mehrfach durchgeführte Abhängigkeitsmarkierung der Redewiedergabe bedeutet einen hohen Planungsaufwand. Das Ergebnis gewährleistet aber auch, dass dem Leser die „Bürde" der Dekodierung entscheidend erleichtert wird.
>
> Multiple dependency marking of reported speech means a high planning effort. However, the result also secures that the decoding "burden" is made decisively easier for the reader.

In German, multiple devices are available, such as a shift in tense and mood. Multiple dependence on birchbark means a deictic shift (indirect speech) plus a complementizer. An even higher degree of dependency is, of course, full syntactic integration (NRSA), which Voeste (ibid.) does not consider to relieve the decoding burden, though. In Voeste's (ibid., 976) opinion, indirect speech has the most substantial planning burden, but it also maximally secures understanding. However, still further syntactic integration, as in narrative reports of speech acts, no longer supports decoding (ibid., 975); it has become too integrated, and essential information is lost. Thus, a narrative report of a speech act implies maximal authorial interference, but, according to Voeste, not necessarily maximal ease of interpretation. But is this true? Firstly, as has been noted already, syntactic integration precludes a wrong assignment of referents by grammatical constraints. In other words, it is the least ambiguous variety. Voeste does, however, not recognize this from her Early Modern German examples: "[…] gehen somit noch einmal wesentliche Information verloren, die im ungünstigsten Fall […] zu Ambiguität führen können." 'so again essential information is lost, which can, in the worst case, […] lead to ambiguity' (ibid., 976). Whatever the nature of the ambiguity perceived by Voeste, it is not of a referential kind: the referents can be identified felicitously because of grammatical constraints. This makes the strategy maximally unambiguous in terms of referential organization. Secondly, NRSAs are used in environments where their use can be afforded (cf. § 6.7.3). So, more authorial effort is rewarded by maximal interference, and hence a maximal ease of interpretation for the reader.

Free direct speech, finally, does not imply more authorial effort than "normal" direct speech. After all, the only difference is that in the former the tags are absent. We have already noted that the interpretative burden for the reader is higher, because the boundaries of the report are not indicated, so that not much can be added about this strategy at the present point in the discussion.

6.7.1.4 Concluding Remarks on Complexity

To sum up: the various strategies cannot be compared unconditionally as to their difficulty of formulation and interpretation. First of all, as we have seen, the additional factor of the narrative and instructive types complicates statements about the authorial planning burden. Secondly, the speech reporting strategies occur in different functional environments, which precludes generalizations about their overall interpretability; this will be the topic of § 6.8. Still, this situation exactly allows us to make a connection with the notions of orality and literacy. After all, a diffuse strategy can only be employed adequately if the degree of orality-backed situational attachment is sufficient to secure a felicitous understanding of the message. More context-dependence means that the text is easier to decipher for the reader *if* the context is appropriate, otherwise it is more difficult. This explains why context-dependence can be a relevant consideration. There is a reason why an author chooses to employ a certain degree of context-dependence, so as to create an optimal balance of effort for himself and for the reader. This happens in close interaction with the situation in which the letter is meant to function, which is connected to orality. This line of thought will be taken up in § 6.7.3. But at this point, another remarkable phenomenon has to be taken into account, in order to further elucidate considerations of authorial effort.

6.7.2 *Slipping*

A phenomenon which is closely connected to complexity and an immediate result of a high authorial burden is known as "**slipping**" (a term first used by Schuelke 1958), i.e. "slipping from one reporting mode to another in midstream" (Collins 2001, 13). In Tannen's (1989, 118) terms this is further specified as "fade-in" (from indirect to direct speech) or "fade-out" (from direct to indirect speech).

(63) Dr. Loper said last night ***he wished "to express my gratitude to all the Stanford students for all the time spent" in the search for his small son.***

SCHUELKE 1958, 90, quoted from *Stanford Daily*, February 20, 1956, p. 1

The report in (63) starts out as indirect, with transparent deictics (*Dr. Loper* and *he* are both in the third person), but then a fade-in occurs to direct speech, with a shifted reference to Dr. Loper (in the first person: *my*). Finally, the report fades out again to indirect speech (third-person *his*).

The phenomenon of slipping is not unknown in Old Russian in general, or also in present-day Russian and English, for that matter, as we have seen in (63). According to Bulaxovskij (1958, 416), who uses the term "контаминации" 'blends', "при построении большого текста обычны [...] срывы с косвенной речи в прямую" 'in the process of the composition of a large text disruptions from indirect to direct speech are common'; he cites an example from the 17th century (ibid.). Instances of slipping are also encountered on birchbark, as will be discussed in this section.

Interestingly, the distinction between narrative and instructive reported speech again turns out to be relevant here. The prevalence of a fade-in, noted by Bulaxovskij, would only apply to the narrative type. In the instructive type, a fade-out would be more likely. Let us see why this is the case, making use of an example from the birchbark corpus. An interesting instance of slipping, which is also mentioned by Collins (2001, 13–14), occurs in N531. We can see the fade-out in this letter: there is a shift from instructive direct to indirect speech, as witnessed by the deictic diagnostic criterion (cf. the subscript letters denoting the identity of the participants, e.g. the first person in the report switching from $_i$ to $_l$):

(64) [...] Ty$_i$ že, brace$_i$ gospodine$_i$, molovi emo$_j$ tako: "ože boudou ljudi$_k$ na moju$_i$ sьtrou$_l$", ože boudou ljudi$_k$ pri komo$_k$ boudou dala$_l$ roukou za zjate$_m$, to te ja$_l$ vo vine. [...]

'[...] But you$_i$, lord$_i$ brother$_i$, speak to him$_j$ in this manner: "If there are people$_k$ [to witness] against my$_i$ sister$_l$", if there are people$_k$ before whom$_k$ I$_l$ shall have given surety for [my$_l$] son-in-law$_m$, then I$_l$ am at fault. [...]'

N531 / 1200–1220 / DND, 416 / translation COLLINS 2001, 14

Why does this shift occur, from a functional point of view? In this extraordinarily long letter, of which only the relevant part is quoted in (64), Anna gives a whole set of instructions to her brother Klimjata regarding what he should say to Kosnjatin in front of witnesses; at first, all these instructions are given in direct speech. But having filled one side of the piece of birchbark and just having started writing on the other side, Anna apparently lost track of the text's referential organization, and started writing in instructive indirect speech, i.e. from her own referential perspective. "Разумеется, психологически эти сбои

легко объяснимы" 'It is obvious that these failures can easily be explained psychologically' (DND, 419), because shifting referential expressions for an extended section of reported speech constitutes quite a dense burden ("Planungsaufwand" 'planning effort' in Koch & Oesterreicher's (2011, 78) terms; cf. § 6.7.1). Anna projects herself into the perspective in which she envisages Klimjata to be when he will be talking to Kosnjatin, which involves a burdensome mental shift for her, as was discussed above. In the narrative type, such a projective shift would occur in the opposite direction: indirect speech involves more authorial burden, so that the author will be inclined to slip into direct speech.

Zaliznjak calls the shifts in N531 "погрешности" 'errors' (DND, 419). But would they really have stood out as failures or errors to the addressee? It is proposed here that they would not.

This leads us on to the next question: Why are such shifts possible on birchbark without losing potential for a correct interpretation? Maier (2015, 164) is concerned with a similar question in the case of Ancient Greek: "why do ancient Greek texts allow mode switching by covert mixed quotation, where English requires overt quotation marks?" The answer is that the language of immediacy is employed, because the situation allows it to be used. Compare Maier's (2015, 164) hypothesis regarding Ancient Greek: "I hypothesize that, to facilitate successful communication, speakers in a direct communicative situation will always try to mark quotation boundaries whenever the context leaves any room for ambiguity.[16] For this marking, speakers, now and in antiquity, rely on an array of more or less subtle paralinguistic means." These paralinguistic means, in turn, presuppose either the physical presence of a messenger, or otherwise a heavier dependence on the context in some other way (cf. the next subsection).

Plank (1986, 299, fn. 5) notes that

> Behaghel (1928, 709) und Kerling (1982) sehen in Fällen von ‚slipping' [...] ein Kennzeichen der mündlichen Rede. Diese Einschätzung scheint mir noch am ehesten haltbar, wenn sich der Übergang von indirekter zu direkter Rede an Satzgrenzen und quasi unwillkürlich vollzieht.

16 Collins (2001: 14) notes that slipping is "common in ordinary discourse in every language with which I am familiar". A remarkable consideration is that, although slipping can be called a typically oral feature, it occurs quite frequently in present-day academic prose—a prototype of the language of distance. An example of it can be seen in the first sentence of this footnote, which "slips" into a direct quotation from Collins. Of course it has the additional benefit of the quotation marks, a typically modern achievement, necessitated by the increased context-independence of the written register.

> Behaghel (1928, 709) and Kerling (1982) see in instances of 'slipping' [...] a characteristic of oral speech. This assessment appears most tenable to me if the switch occurs from indirect to direct speech, at sentence boundaries and quasi inadvertently.

However, as we have seen, this is only true for narrative reported speech. The clearest instance of slipping in our corpus occurs in instructive speech (N531), and involves a switch from direct to indirect speech. This observation again underlines the validity and usefulness of the distinction between narrative and instructive reported speech. Both make different demands on the author in connection with his planning burden.

Collins (1996, 46) states that "from the standpoint of language use indirect speech is well motivated". It should be noted, however, that in any case in N531 this is not a conscious choice, nor is it for the benefit of the reader. It is rather a way to avoid the author's high planning burden when formulating a long stretch of instructive direct speech, which necessitates projection, i.e. the author projects his utterance in a different perspective, especially when the letter's addressee is mentioned (in the projected first person).

In this respect, N354 is also of interest (the first part of this letter has been quoted as (49); see (7) in § 2.2 for the entire letter). It shows a switch from instructive indirect speech to direct address of the envisaged addressee. This is not exactly the same as the fade-in discussed above, but the reason for the shift is similar: although less demanding than instructive direct speech, a prolonged stretch of instructive indirect speech would apparently also be too burdensome for the author to formulate. But in N354, the author goes one step further: the intermediary function of the present addressee is disposed of. The result is, of course, communicative heterogeneity. A slightly different analysis would also be possible, viz. slipping from indirect into free direct speech, in which case the phenomena of communicative heterogeneity and speech reporting (of the instructive kind) would somehow seem to overlap.

This leads us back to the greater effort of instructive direct speech. As was already mentioned above, it is quite probable that examples like (62) should actually be analysed as instances of a phenomenon akin to overt communicative heterogeneity. The letter then serves as a mandate. The extra effort which a further integration of the report into the frame would have necessitated for the author is dispensed with if the result is deemed acceptable and interpretable anyway, just like in the case of hidden communicative heterogeneity. Here we have the first link to orality. On a more basic level, a lack of planning is a sign of the language of immediacy.

6.7.3 *Context-Dependence and Orality*

It should be borne in mind that the above statements about the complexity of the various strategies apply to the phenomenon of speech reporting in general, not to its specific cases of usage. Every instance of speech reporting is embedded in a certain context, upon which its felicitous interpretation is dependent to a greater or lesser degree. This is a decisive factor in relation to matters of complexity. Thus, for example, in the case of a speech reporting strategy that by itself would be complex for the reader, the reader can be "disburdened" by the favourable context in which the report functions.

If a strategy such as (free) direct speech is complex for the reader, this usually means that the report is dissociated from the context, because otherwise it would be easier to infer the deictic shift from the context. This is the crux of the whole matter, which is also connected to orality. In other words, complexity is only a relative concept; it totally depends on the measure of contextualization. The extent to which a report is *tied to* the context is interrelated with the extent to which its interpretation is *dependent on* that context. This corresponds to Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) "Situationsverschränkung" 'situational involvement'.

If the author renders a report using deictic integration, this means that the report is decontextualized from the original speech event. This leads to interpretative ease for the reader (who does not need to infer a deictic shift) if he has no recourse to context, i.e. if a context-independent interpretation is necessary (e.g. if there is no messenger who can elaborate on the written message). However, deictic integration does demand an authorial effort: an effort which is unnecessary if a context-dependent interpretation is possible. In that case, the deictic disambiguation must take place in common ground, and the report is maximally context-dependent. One element of disambiguation is the messenger, who enlarges the common ground by providing a face-to-face situation.

The addressee has a greater or lesser degree of freedom to interpret the report according to the situation in which it functions. If less freedom is left to him, the meaning is more rigidly encoded in the words themselves (i.e. the language of distance is employed). This is necessary if there is not enough common ground to warrant a felicitous interpretation of the language of immediacy, e.g. because of a distance in space and time which is not bridged by a messenger or by a sufficient shared knowledge of the topic.

It is here that another connection with our general topic of orality and literacy can be made. Now, by way of a caveat, we have to direct some attention to the topic of functional considerations in the use of speech reporting strategies.

6.8 Functional Considerations

The above discussion might (wrongly) create the impression that the only aspect which plays a role in the choice of a speech reporting strategy is connected to the degree of orality. Of course there is more to it than that. This subsection serves to put our earlier considerations into the appropriate perspective. Collins (1996, 2001) extensively describes the pragmatic functions of the various speech reporting strategies. When transferring these insights to the data on birchbark, one might expect to find the same tendencies. In some cases this comes true, in others less clearly so.

Collins (2001, 50, 286) argues that every usage of a particular speech reporting strategy is pragmatically or functionally motivated. So it is not just a question of the extent to which the author wanted to gain control over the interpretative process. However, the text type of Collins's investigations (Biblical discourse in Old Church Slavonic and legal discourse in Old Russian) is much lengthier than our brief birchbark letters. Accordingly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to transfer all his insights about functional motivations of reporting strategies to our data. But let us briefly review the main contentions of Collins's (2001) theory, anyway.

Direct speech often has a foregrounding function, i.e. the report is made more prominent (Collins 1996, 64), more vivid (2001, 68) and (seemingly) more objective (ibid., 71). All these aspects are due to the higher interpretative demands that direct speech makes on the reader. Thus, he is more involved in the joint project (Clark 1996), which is essentially dialogic in nature. A similar "mutuality" is absent, or much less obvious, in prototypical written language.

We have already seen some of the considerations concerning the authorial burden. Collins (2001, 201) also notes that "the longer and more convoluted a report is, the greater the preference is for [direct speech]". This is the only strategy that allows really long reports. As we have seen by the phenomenon of slipping, the selection of a strategy does not have to be a conscious choice.

"Where S [the speaker] is trying to stress common ground that he shares with H [the hearer], we would expect him to make only the minimal adjustment in point of view when reporting … Hence we would expect a preference for direct quotes with uninterpreted referring expressions, names, and so on, even where this may result in a loss of clarity" (Brown & Levinson 1987, 122, as cited by Clark & Gerrig 1990, 793). It should be borne in mind that this loss of clarity must be compensated, in our case by the situation in which the letter functions. When direct speech is used, normally "there is no risk of perspectival confusion […], because disambiguating elements appear in the immediate context" (Collins

1996, 43). If there are no such elements, the disambiguation must take place in the common ground, as was noted above (i.e. the report becomes more context-dependent).

Thus, we have to do with communicative (common ground) as well as purely propositional considerations (saliency, given/new etc.). The choice for direct speech may be influenced by functional motivations, but it can only be employed if this is allowed by the situation in which the letter plays its part. Accordingly, the nature of the situation of utterance (including the possible presence of a messenger) is an underlying, more basic factor than the other considerations. In other words, there are functional reasons for choosing direct speech (in the area of saliency, etc.), but these reasons have to be "affordable". The functional reasons mentioned by Collins (2001) are overruled if precluded by the situation of distance that exists in written communication. After all, there is not much point in making a report more vivid, or in foregrounding the information in the report, if this results in a confusion of perspectives, and hence in a severe loss of clarity.

To sum up: the use of direct speech does not necessarily and exclusively have to emanate from an oral mindset, but the fact that readers were able to deal with it, in certain cases without the help of further intra-textual disambiguating elements, suggests that an oral mindset was available in correspondence; in other words, it suggests that letters could be part of a communicative strategy based on immediacy. In addition, and within the confines of the demands of the communicative configuration, there are other functional factors playing a role, such as those mentioned by Collins (2001).

A great deal can be said about the functional and propositional reasons for the use of a particular speech reporting strategy, but on a more fundamental level, the communicative prerequisites for a felicitous interpretation must be favourable if a strategy is to be used. Orality is to be seen as a more underlying factor compared to the factors mentioned by Collins (2001).

A similar line of thought can be taken up for indirect speech, with the difference that indirect speech can be used more widely: there are fewer restrictions on its distribution. Indirect speech does not have a demand for immediacy: it can be used in the language of distance as well.

Indirect speech conveys "backgrounded information" (Collins 2001, 107), which is less prominent (1996, 42). If we look at the length of the examples on birchbark, they turn out to be much shorter stretches than those in direct speech. However, the brevity of the birchbark letters often precludes bold statements about salient and less salient propositions.

"In reported commands of this kind, the use of indirectness prevents confusion between the perspectives of the addressees in the different layers of

representation" (Collins 1996, 40). So this is a functional consideration, but definitely one that has to do with the limitations and drawbacks of the written medium, i.e. the language of distance. This also explains the almost exclusive occurrence of the instructive type among the instances of indirect speech, i.e. it firmly attaches the indirect strategy to the instructive type (although, conversely, the instructive type often occurs in the direct strategy, too). It can be added to this that an instruction phrased in indirect speech sounds less threatening; it functions as a mitigation (German *Abtönung*) of the instruction.

Of course, if the content of a report is less relevant, the reader should not need to invest much effort in decoding the report. On the other hand, if it is very relevant and important, (a) the reader should be forced to invest more time, and thus pay more attention to the important proposition; but this works only if disambiguating elements are present (either in the text, in the common ground or in the person of a messenger); (b) if no such disambiguating elements are present, the safest way is to choose a compact strategy, such as an NRSA, in order to maximally ensure a felicitous interpretation, even if the lighter interpretative effort results in the reader paying less attention to the report.

6.9 Free Direct Speech Revisited

In free direct speech, the reported speaker is always mentioned in the preceding discourse: "the context obviates the need to identify the addressee" (Collins 2001, 163). In addition, it is connected to turns in speaking, which links the strategy with the conversational mode of speech. As has been pointed out already (regarding Tv.5, cf. Gippius & Schaeken 2011), the reporter assumes the least responsibility for the reported utterance in free direct speech.

As we have seen in Figures 5 and 6, direct speech definitely becomes rarer throughout the period. However, one thing remains unclear, viz. why the most diffuse reporting strategy (free indirect speech) is attested only towards the end of the period, in the 14th and 15th centuries (cf. Table 10 in § 6.4.4).[17] We would expect such a prototypically oral strategy to occur much earlier, and subsequently fade away through time. Why does this not seem to be the case, judging by the data?

As Gippius and Schaeken (2011, 20) note, "the sender can choose to leave out the tag if he thinks that the addressee is able to comprehend the structure of the

17 Because of the limited number of attestations, free direct speech has not been included in the diagrams.

message on the basis of common ground knowledge of the situational context". The fact that such an oral-based strategy still occurs in the later period serves as an indication that communication on birchbark could still be "mediated" by the messenger, who "enacted" the letter's contents. Non-transparent referential expressions were thus made up for by the messenger's personal presence. It follows from this that even towards the end of the period the messenger could still play a prominent role, and the pattern of communication could still be largely oral.

In spite of this apparently undiminished relevance of the messenger even in the later period of birchbark correspondence, some indications can be found for the phasing out of oral strategies; a significant one is provided by the following letter:

(65) P Čolomъ bьjetь Oleksei i o Zabolotьja Sofonteju Timof[ě]ju. Čo jeste prikazali mně svoju zemlju, noně, ospodo, podovalъ jesi požni vašimъ zdorovьjemь. (Popъ molvitь:) "***Položi gramotu po čomu esi davalъ***." (Olesei:) "***Prikazali mi starěšii, i jazъ davalъ***." A noně popъ pověstutь takъ: "***D[a]valъ jesi požn[i v naim]y, i xto imetь tъii požni kositь, i jazъ tyxъ poimaju, da travu na vorotъ vzvjažju, da ixъ vedu v gorodъ***." Noně, ospodo, kakъ o mně sja pečalutesja? A jazъ vamъ, svoi ospode, čolomъ bьju. Tolko, ospo, imete mene žalovatь, oottošlite, ospodo, p ko mně gramotьku do Petrova dn͡i, zanežь, ospodo, seno kosjatь o Petrove dni.

'Oleksej bows down about the pieces of land behind the swamp to Sofontii and Timofej. [Concerning the fact] that you have entrusted me your land, I have given out fields in your name. (The priest says:) "***Show the writ, on the basis of which you have given it.***" (Oleksej [says]:) "***The elders have ordered me, and I have given it***." And now the priest says thus: "***You have given fields on loan, and whoever will mow those lands, I will get them, and I will tie the grass around their neck and bring them to the city***." How, lords, will you now take care of me? And I bow down to you, my lords. If you, lords, will reward me, then send me, lords, a letter before Peter's day, because, lords, they mow the hay on Peter's day.'

N962 / mid-15th century / NGB XII, 69

It is significant that the words rendered in brackets here are added above the line in the original. As the editors (NGB XII, 71) already acknowledge, these additions solve the problem as to who pronounces the respective utterances and how they are connected to the rest of the text; that is to say, they serve to disambiguate the deictic frame of the stretch of reported speech.

Apparently, the maximally hearer-based free direct mode of reporting did not suffice anymore; in other words, writing had become too "literate" to tolerate such oral-based deviations from the increasingly literate norm. First, the author tried to couch his message in the "old" oral pattern, but then he suddenly realized that this was not clear enough (ibid.). This might have occurred to him halfway through, because the third stretch of reported speech is already "properly" introduced by a tag in the main text: *A noně popъ pověstutь takъ* 'and now the priest says thus'.

This tendency towards greater explicitness may be connected to what Lazar (2011, 132) calls the "schwindende Rolle des Boten" 'declining role of the messenger'. In the old "system", the messenger would have elaborated on the letter's content; he would have performed the letter in such a way that the addressee could infer the identity of the utterers of the various reported speech events, as well as the boundaries between reported speech and authorial narrative. "Their boundaries—their beginnings and ends—must be clear" (Clark & Gerrig 1990, 766). However, due to the changing role of the messenger (from "performer" to a mere "carrier"), which Lazar (2011, 147) posits in the 14th century, these boundaries were no longer clear enough in free direct speech, so that the author of N962, in the process of writing (or dictating, for that matter), made the decision to resort to tagged direct speech.

Much more remains to be said in regard to Lazar's bold statement about the "declining role of the messenger" in the 14th century. After all, as we have seen, even the 15th century still witnesses instances of free direct speech, which can be taken as an indication of the messenger's unaltered role and presence. On the other hand, the tendency for greater explicitness in (65) presents evidence for a tendency towards a greater awareness by the author of the distance involved in writing, which may indeed point to a decline of the "mediatory" role of the messenger. This discrepancy obliges one to be careful in bringing forward any decisive claims about the declining role of the messenger that are based on evidence concerning speech reporting categories. Any indications should be substantiated and reinforced by including the insights provided by the study of other linguistic parameters in the corpus.

6.10 More Elements of Orality: Dictation and Performatives

There are some more issues that remain to be worked out concerning orality and speech reporting. In some birchbark letters, the reported addressee coincides with the letter's main (real) addressee. Strictly speaking, it is narrative reported speech, but functionally, more remains to be said about it.

(66) Ivanjaja molovila Fimь: "ljubo kunь vosoli, pak li dorgo prodaju".

'Ivan's wife has said to Fima: "You either send the money, or I will demand that a large fine is imposed on you".'

St.R.11 / 1160–1180 / DND, 446

Zaliznjak (DND, 447) already notes that *molovila* 'say-PERF.F' is a perfect that should be understood in a performative sense. A similar instance with *rekla* 'say-PERF.F' is encountered in St.R.43. Three considerations can be voiced here concerning the orality/literacy interface. First of all, it should be noted that the tag "said" testifies to a perception of a letter as an extension of the spoken word. Secondly, the use of the perfect tense for performative utterances might point to a projection of the temporal deictic centre to the time of reading, so that a situation of face-to-face communication is envisaged (cf. the notion of epistolary past tense, chapter 7). Thirdly, the tag formula can be seen as an indication for a dictated letter (cf. N8, N771, Gippius 2012, 243). A dictated letter concerns the writing down of an actual oral instruction, so that the letter is a report of an earlier speech event. Not only the report itself, but also the letter as a whole is a report, a written fixation of a spoken utterance.

Example (20) in § 4.7 (N344) is also very likely to belong to this type. A more comprehensive treatment of the category of performatives, to which these examples belong, is given in another case study (chapter 8).

An instructive counterpart to this type can be seen in N954:

(67) Gramota ot Žiročьka i ot Těšьka kъ V[ъ]dъvinou. Mlvi Šilьcevi: "Cemou pošibaeši svinьě cjužě? A p[ъ]nesla Nъ[z]drьka. A esi posoromilъ konьcь vъxъ Ljudinь. So onogo polou gramata. Pro kъni že ta bys(tь) ože si tako sъtvorilъ."

'A letter from Žiročko and from Těško to Vdovin. Say to Šil'ce: "Why are you damaging other people's pigs? Nozdr'ka has made [this] known. And you have disgraced the entire Ljudin End. [There has been] a letter from the other side [of the river]. It was about horses, that you have done the same with them".'

N954 / 1100–1120 / NGB XII, 50

This utterance does not belong to the performative type (it is clearly instructive), but some of its functions seem to overlap with performatives. Speech reporting in this case serves only as a strategy to involve more persons into the communicative act. Two possible scenarios come to mind. The first is that

this letter is a type of ratification, just like the communicatively heterogeneous letters can provide, only here it is more explicit: it is phrased in a different constellation. Vdovin may be the messenger, who is authorized by Žiročko and Těško to deliver the message in their name to Šil'ce. This would imply that the letter was meant to be shown to Šil'ce, who can, consequently, be considered the letter's main (though indirect) addressee.

The instructive type of reported speech may thus teach us another lesson about orality. Leaning on Gippius (2004), the question might be asked: was the letter's addressee supposed to present the letter and read it out aloud in front of the "represented addressee"? In that case, the letter's "косвенный адресат" 'indirect addressee' would be the one who is mentioned as "Say to X". Are (some of) these letters with instructive reported speech also to be looked upon as mandates? This would provide a functional explanation for the use of instructive direct reported speech. The best example is N954 (67), but also N8 (example (44), § 6.4.1) and N665 (Table 7, DND: 366) can be analysed in this way.

On the other hand, a second scenario remains, viz. that the authors wrote to their superior, asking him to take action.[18] Now, who could Vdovin have been in that case? It might be argued that he was some person in a governmental function, who was needed to lend authority to the letter. In that case, the authorization would work out reversely compared to the other scenario, sketched above.

Thus, we can see that speech reporting can be more than what it might seem to be at face value. Its use can serve a specific, pragmatic goal (functioning as a mandate) within a certain communicative situation, where it gives added value (ratification) to an otherwise monological discourse.

6.11 Concluding Remarks

The remark has been made that "both direct and indirect speech are equally characteristic of orality and literacy" (Collins 2006, 285). Though it is not stated explicitly, it seems that Collins conceives of literacy in the medial sense (cf. Koch & Oesterreicher 1985). The above reflections have shown that matters

18 It may seem attractive to take the hypocoristic forms of the authors' names (Žiročko and Těško instead of Žiroslavъ and Těx ...; cf. NGB XII: 54) as an indicator of deference. However, I have been unable to find solid evidence for this claim, due to the somewhat obscure distribution of full names and hypocoristic forms. More research would be necessary in this respect.

of orality and literacy do nevertheless have a bearing on the use of speech reporting strategies, though this is somewhat mitigated by other, functional, considerations.

The differences in authorial effort show how crucial it is to make a distinction between narrative and instructive reported speech. It is too simplistic to state that more authorial effort results in a lighter interpretative burden, directed by what is coded in the text (literacy), and, reversely, less authorial effort results in a heavier interpretative burden with more reliance on the context (orality). The relevant factors turned out to be more subtle.

Let us recapitulate three major points that have come out of this case study, against the background of the theoretical premise that speech reporting strategies can be classified according to their degree of integration into the reporting discourse, which results in their degree of context-dependence, and, consequently, the degree of complexity for the author in phrasing and for the addressee in interpreting the report.

1) The distinction between narrative and instructive reported speech is crucial for establishing a link with the category of communicatively heterogeneous birchbark letters, in that instructive direct speech can be interpreted as a mandate.
2) The degree of orality can be measured by the degree of context-dependence, which is in proportion to the role of the messenger; in the case of mandates, the messenger is identical to the letter's addressee.
3) The diachronic picture shows, among other things, a decline in the use of direct speech and an increase in the use of NRSAs. This means that reports tend to become less context-dependent over time, which is a sign of *Verschriftlichung*.

These results provide us with the building blocks for a further appraisal in the light of the other case studies in chapter 9.

CHAPTER 7

Case Study III: Epistolary Past Tense

7.1 Introduction[1]

The present chapter deals with a phenomenon that is widely encountered in various (ancient) written cultures, known as "epistolary past tense". However, this phenomenon has not yet been recognized in the corpus of birchbark letters from medieval Novgorod and surrounding cities, or anywhere else in older stages of Slavic. In this chapter, we shall discuss a number of examples from the birchbark corpus that could be analyzed in the same vein. The question to be answered is: can this interpretation be justified in the case of Old Russian, and to what extent is the use of the past tense in instances like these motivated by a mindset of oral communication? Judging by the predominant occurrence of the epistolary past tense in ancient written cultures, it is plausible to start from the hypothesis that its use has something to do with the development from orality to literacy.

It will first be shown that some of the past tense examples on birchbark can only be interpreted as instances of the epistolary past tense (§ 7.2). Secondly, a number of parallel examples from other ancient languages will be put forward (§ 7.3). The analysis that is usually given for these instances would seem to fit well for the examples on birchbark, too (§ 7.4). However, it will be argued that the standard analysis of the epistolary past tense for other languages, such as Latin, does not apply to all instances in the Novgorod birchbark letters. Instead, it will be shown that for quite a few of the instances from the birchbark corpus a different analysis is necessary (§ 7.5), which in some sense resembles the use of performatives (§ 7.6). These findings may have important implications for the analysis of comparable data from other languages (§ 7.7).

1 The same data were presented by J. Schaeken and E.L.J. Fortuin at a conference of the Slavic Linguistics Society (Aix-en-Provence, 2 September 2011) and analysed in Sxaken, Fortejn & Dekker [Schaeken, Fortuin & Dekker] (2014).

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7.2 Birchbark Data and Discussion

Before discussing an instance of the epistolary past tense, it is insightful to first discuss a standard use of the past tense. It should be noted that the perfect is the default past tense on birchbark, whereas aorists and imperfects are extremely rare and stylistically highly marked (DND, 142, 173). In the following example, two perfect verb forms are encountered:

(68) [...] a ***zvalo jesmь*** vaso v gorodo, i vy mojego slova nь ***poslušali.*** [...]

'[...] and I ***have called*** you to the city, but you ***have*** not ***listened*** to my word. [...]'

N345 / 1340–1360 / DND, 556

It is clear that the verbs in the perfect refer to events which took place prior to the writing of the letter. This is also in accordance with the definition of the past tense for modern Russian, as given by Percov (2001, 193): "глагольная ситуация предшествует некоторому времени отсчета" 'the situation described by the verb precedes some reference time'. In (68), the reference point is the moment of speech. This is the standard, unmarked use of the past tense.

Now consider the following birchbark letter from Staraja Russa:

(69) Poklonъ ot Grorьi Jermolě i Ozěkěju. ***Poslasmь***-PERF.M.1SG k tobě šestь bocekъ vina, kakъ palěcě xvati. I ty to osmotri gorazno, a prodai kakъ i tě po tomu že. {Li to prodale,} i ty to otšli. A moim rob[ět]amъ ne davai serebra; po[šl]i z dolgomъ.

'Greetings from Gr[ig]or'ja to Jermola and Ozěkěj. ***I have sent*** to you six barrels of wine, [filled] to a finger's length [from the top]. And you check it carefully, and sell them like those others, under the same conditions. {And if you have sold them,} send back the proceeds. And don't give my servants (?) the money; send it along with the debt.'

St.R.39 / 1380–1400 / NGB XII, 167

Let us concentrate on the word *poslasmь*-PERF.1SG.[2] In the edition (NGB XII, 169), *poslasmь* is translated with a past tense form (Modern Russian *ja poslal* 'I sent / have sent').

2 This form is an unusual contraction of the forms *posla*(*lъ*) 'send-*l*-PTC.M.SG' and (*je*)*smь* 'be-

When analyzing this birchbark text from a pragmaphilological and linguistic point of view, a number of questions arise. In this text we find a past tense, but how should this past tense be interpreted? In its prototypical use, the past tense indicates an event that took place before a particular reference point, often the moment of speech, as in (68) above. But if this is the case in (69), it would mean that the six barrels of wine were sent prior to, and thus independently of, the letter. After all, that is what the translation of the perfect tense in the edition would make us believe: *ja poslal* 'I have sent'. If that is indeed the case, we can only speculate about the way the barrels of wine were sent; they may have been sent with an earlier accompanying letter or with a name tag, or perhaps even without a written message. If so, the next question concerns the temporal interval between sending off the wine and the letter. Was there just a couple of minutes in between, or perhaps a couple of days?

But this scenario does not seem very probable and realistic. It should be remembered that the contents of the barrels should be checked upon arrival: *i ty to osmotri gorazno* 'and you check it carefully'. We must assume, then, that Grigor'ja expects the letter to be delivered more or less at the same time and the same place as the goods. If so, the most efficient and reliable way to make sure that the barrels of wine will be checked upon arrival is, of course, to send the letter together with the six barrels of wine. But then, again, we stumble across the perfect tense: *poslasmь* 'I have sent'. If the scenario sketched above is true, why would not the present tense be used, indicating that the writer is in the process of sending the six barrels of wine? That would, after all, be the normal procedure in present-day Russian (and in English as well, for that matter): *ja tebe posylaju* [...] 'I (hereby) send you [...]'. But on birchbark, forms of *-sylati* are not attested at all (more examples of the "sending" type will be dealt with below).

So we encounter a past tense form, but it does not seem to have the expected semantics, i.e. it most probably does not denote an event that lies in the past, from the perspective of the writer. But this leaves us at a loss about its function. How can it be analyzed and explained? This issue is not so easily decided, while being confronted with the "bad data problem" that is so pervasive in the field of historical pragmatics (see § 2.2). Before proceeding to a further discussion, we shall now review a few more texts that deal with the delivery of goods. Here is an example which is similar to (69):

PRES.1SG' (NGB XII: 169). Alternatively, as Nørgård-Sørensen (2015) proposes, the form can be analysed as an aorist with a person-number marker (a contraction of *posla* 'send-AOR' and (*je*)*smь* 'be-PRES.1SG'); this is, however, far less plausible.

(70) Colobitьe otь Smona k popu Ivanu. Co by esi moego moskotьja moego peresmotrele dad by xorь ne poportilь. A ja tobi, svoemu ospodinu, colomь biju v korobki. A ***poslalь estь*** klucь Stopanomь. A pomitka gornostalь.

'Request from Semen to the priest Ivan. May you check up on my goods so that moths will not ruin [them]; I request to you, my lord, in regard of my trunk. And ***I have sent*** the key with Stepan. And the mark (on the trunk) is an ermine.'

N413 / 1400–1410 / DND, 662

So, Semen asks the priest Ivan to check his goods which are stored in the church. In order to do so, Ivan needs the key to the storage room, which Semen recognizes: "And I have sent the key with Stepan". If we take the past tense form at face value, we have to assume two separate, consecutive acts of communication: (a) Stepan bringing the key; and (b) another person bringing the letter. However, both acts are fully interdependent; thus, taking into consideration matters of efficiency and assurance of the request to be fulfilled adequately, it makes more sense to assume that we are dealing with a single action: Stepan is the letter-bearer, bringing with him the key which is necessary to comply with the instructions.

(71) Ognu Jelizaru mnogo čelomъ biju. ***Poslalъ jemь***, ogne, k tobě s Larionь(cem)[ъ 100] kleščevъ. Pošli, ospodine, [...]

'To lord Jelizar I bow deeply. ***I have sent***, lord, to you with Larionec 100 breams. Send, lord, [...]'

N964 / end of 14th century / NGB XII, 75

The editors already comment on the fact that the name of the sender is not mentioned: "В начале грамоты стоит весьма редкая формула: от первого лица «челом бью», но без указания автора; предполагается, что адресат сам поймет, от кого письмо" 'The beginning of the letter has quite a rare formula: in the first person *I bow deeply*, but without indication of the author; it is supposed that the addressee himself will know from whom the letter came' (NGB XII, 75). If we suppose that the letter was sent without the goods, which either were on their way to the addressee or had already arrived, the carrier of the goods himself (Larionec) must then have communicated to the addressee the origin of the delivery. He could have done this orally, or by bringing an earlier letter from the addressee with him. N964 would then be another (second)

letter in which further instructions are given (the preserved fragment ends with *Pošli, ospodine* [...] 'send, lord, [...]'). Again, these arrangements seem implausibly awkward and laborious. And again, it is much simpler and more reasonable to assume a scenario in which the goods were sent together with the letter, and that the carrier, who is explicitly mentioned (Larionec), was the one who made the name of the sender clear to the addressee (if that was necessary at all).

(72) Poklonъ ospži mtri. ***Poslalъ jesmь*** s posadnicimъ Manuilomъ 20 bělъ k tobě. [...]

'Greetings to madam, mother. ***I have sent*** you 20 squirrel pelts with the governor's [man] Manuil. [...]'

N358 / 1340–1360 / DND, 550

(73) Ot Jureja k Nosu. ***Poslale jesemъ*** so Mixalъkoju sto koroběi [...]

'From Jurij to Nos. ***I have sent*** with Mixalka a hundred baskets [...]'

N937 / 1380–1400 / DND, 634

In examples (72) and (73) we can argue the same way as was done above. Manuil in N358 and Mixalka in N937 are either the carriers of the goods only (at some point in time before the letter was sent), or of the goods as well as the letter (simultaneously).

If the goods had been sent off beforehand and the letter followed later with a second messenger, the relevance of the "sending" statement in the letter would at best be questionable. Such a procedure would reveal a blatant lack of efficiency which can hardly be systematically assumed as being typical of businessmen in medieval Novgorod, or anywhere, for that matter. What is more, giving superfluous information is by no means a general characteristic of communication on birchbark; on the contrary, it is often characterized by a rather pervasive scarcity of information. Having reviewed the above examples, we need to stick to the scenario of a simultaneous sending of the goods and the letter with one messenger, and thus suppose a non-standard use of the past tense.

But what explanation can be given for this particular usage of the past tense? I propose that the above examples from the birchbark corpus are illustrations of a phenomenon that has been observed in a variety of languages by various researchers, who have described it as "epistolary (past) tense" or "epistolary perfect". In this case, the past tense refers to events that take place at the moment of writing. The use of the epistolary past tense is often explained as

a strategy in which the sender concentrates on *the perspective of the reader*. When the letter is received, and the reader's perspective is taken, the sender's action obviously lies in the past. The sender anticipates this perspective and "projects" it into the letter by means of a past tense form (cf. Lyons 1977, 579). Before determining the applicability of this analysis to the data on birchbark, we shall first review some examples from some other languages in which this phenomenon has been identified, viz. Latin, Greek and some of the ancient Semitic languages.

7.3 Epistolary Past Tense in Other Languages

First of all, the existence of the epistolary past tense in Latin has been accepted for a long time already. "In Latin, the point of view of the speaker may be ignored [...]. Rather, the point of view of the hearer (or rather, the reader) is relevant, since actions contemporaneous with the letter-writing will be a part of the past by the time the reader sees the letter" (Lakoff 1970, 847). We shall illustrate this point making recourse to an example from a corpus of everyday texts not unlike the Novgorod birchbark letters, viz. the wooden Vindolanda tablets, dating from the first and second centuries AD and found in the North of England:

(74) Metto Aduecto plurimam suo salutem ***missi***-PERF.IND.1SG tibi materias per Saconem [...]

'Metto (?) to his Advectus (?) very many greetings. I ***have sent*** you wooden materials through the agency of Saco. [...]'

Tab. Vindol. II 309 / ca. 100 AD / BOWMAN & THOMAS 1994, 286

In Greek, the use of the epistolary past tense, usually the aorist, is also well attested. One example from the New Testament will suffice by way of illustration:

(75) [...] ὃν ***ἔπεμψα***-AOR.IND.1SG πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλέσῃ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.

'[...] whom I ***have sent*** [i.e. am sending] unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts' (KJV).

Epistle to the Ephesians 6:22

As can be seen in (75), the King James Version (1611) translates *ἔπεμψα* [AOR.IND.1SG] using a past tense, "I have sent". More modern Bible translations recognize the epistolary character of the aorist, and accordingly translate it using a present tense, e.g. the New International Version UK (1978), "I ***am sending*** him to you". A similar state of affairs can be seen in Russian translations, where the older Synodal Version (1876) has "которого я и ***послал*** к вам" 'whom I also have sent to you', whereas the Contemporary Version (2011) reads "Я посылаю его к вам" 'I send him to you'. Moulton and Turner (1963, 72–73) comment on the Greek epistolary aorist as follows: "The aorist in *Epistolary* style (as in Latin) is logical, since the action so described will be past at the time the letter is read".

Further parallels for the epistolary use of the past tense can be found in several ancient Semitic languages, such as Classical Syriac:

(76) mţl hn' ***ktbt***-PERF.1SG b'yt mnk dt't'

'For this reason I ***have written*** [i.e. am writing], asking you to come.'
The Doctrine of Addai, the Apostle / 6th cent. AD / ROGLAND 2001, 247

Rogland (2001, 247–248) comments on this phrase as follows: "What we are dealing with here is an epistolary convention in which the writer adopts the temporal standpoint of the recipient of the letter and therefore writes in the past tense".

Going considerably further back in time, an Ancient Hebrew ostracon will be taken as an example. Be it noted that it is of a genre which can be considered similar to the majority of birchbark letters, dealing with everyday affairs.

(77) hnh ***šlhty*** lhᶜyd bkm

'I [hereby] ***have sent*** [i.e. am sending] [you this message] to warn you.'
Tel Arad ostracon, no. 24 / late 7th/early 6th cent. BC / PARDEE 1983, 36

Our final example from the Semitic languages stems from Akkadian, where the phenomenon is particularly well attested: "Properly 'epistolary' perfects occur in the Akkadian of the Amarna letters with the verbs *šapāru* and *šūbulu* 'to send' many times" (Pardee and Whiting 1987, 14).

(78) [...] ù anuma uttašar ^{amêlu} mâr ***šiipriia*** ana maḫriḳa ù alluú uttašarka ina kati ^{amêlu} mâr ***šiipia*** ana katú 1 me bilat erē [...]

> '[...] so I ***have sent*** [i.e. am sending] a messenger on to you, and I ***have*** even ***sent*** [i.e. am sending] with the messenger to you 100 talents of copper.'
>
> Amarna letter / 14th cent. BC / PARDEE and WHITING 1987, 16

So far, we have pointed to attestations of the epistolary past tense from various ancient sources. However, the same phenomenon occurs in our day (in spite of the fact that most of the abovementioned examples cannot normally be rendered with a past tense in English). Nutting (1916, 71) already notes the modern use of epistolary past tense: "A still closer approach to the Latin epistolary use of the past tense may be found in the following usage. The writer, on his arrival home, sometimes finds awaiting him a note to this effect: "I *have gone* to the city. Will be back at four". At the time the note was written, going to the city was merely prospective".

7.4 The Data on Birchbark Revisited

The observations made by the various authors quoted above all point in the same direction: they all mention the timeframe as being adapted to the reader's temporal perspective. But is this analysis adequate for the examples on birchbark, too? To answer this question, a more thorough review of the data on birchbark is necessary.

In Table 12 below, I present all instances on birchbark, as far as I have been able to detect, that are open to an analysis along the lines sketched above. The instances are presented in chronological order. The fifth column indicates the number of the example in the present chapter, if applicable. Due to the "bad data problem", there are some cases where doubts exist about the specific character of the past tense; these instances are indicated by a question mark.

Let us now further clarify the use the epistolary past tense on birchbark by discussing two examples from Table 12, which do not deal with the delivery of goods (as was the case in the examples treated above), but with other actions. They clearly point to a shift to the reader's temporal perspective.

(79) Ot Žirjatь poklanjanie ko Radjatь. Vodai semu eže ***rьklo***—vьrьšcju tu.

> 'From Žirjata to Radjata. Give this [man] what he ***has said***—that grain.'
>
> N879 / 1120–1140 / DND, 368

This is a complete letter, in which *semu* 'this-M.DAT.SG, i.e. to this [man]' refers to the messenger or letter-bearer (Gippius 2004, 205, cf. Mendoza 2002, 300).

TABLE 12 *Cases of "epistolary past tense" on birchbark*

No.	Date	Verb	Translation	Example
N842	1120–1140	*poslati*[3]	send	(fn. 12)
N119	1120–1140	*vъdati*[4]	give	
N879	1120–1140	*reči*	say	(79)
N952	1140–1160	*poslati*[5]	send	
N384	1160–1180	*dati*[6]	give	
N723 (?)	1160–1180	*iti*[7]	go	
Torž.10	1200–1220	*poiti*	go, depart	(82)
N358	1340–1360	*poslati*	send	(72)
N133	1360–1380	*poslati*	send	
N131	1360–1380	*poslati*[8]	send	
N259/265	1360–1380	*poslati*[9]	send	
N281 (?)	1360–1380	*poslati*	send	
N578 (?)	1360–1380	*dati*	give	
St.R.39	1380–1400	*poslati*	send	(69)

3 Here we find a rare example of the use of the aorist: *posъlaxově* 'the two of us have sent'. See further below, fn. 12.

4 See DND: 273 for an explanation of the pragmatical aspects of this text: "Весьма вероятно, что грамоту доставил не кто иной, как упоминаемый в ней Гюргевич; в этом случае ее общий смысл таков: 'Податель сего вручит тебе такую-то сумму от меня. Возьми и раздай людям'." 'It is most probable that the letter was delivered by none else than the Gjurgevič who is mentioned in it; in that case, its general sense is: 'The bearer of this will give you this and that sum from me. Take it and distribute it to the people'.'

5 Here I have the second part of the text in mind: *I poklanjanie ot Vjacьšьkě kъ Lazorьvi. Poslalь estь konь jukovoucьko* [...] 'And greetings from Vjačeška to Lazor'. I have sent the packhorse [...].'

6 Cf. the translation in DND: 358: "Вот что я даю (букв.: дал) Савве" 'Look what I give (lit. have given) to Savva'.

7 Cf. the comment in DND: 355: "Письмо могло быть написано с дороги; но возможно также, что «я пошел» означает здесь просто 'я сейчас отправляюсь'". 'The letter may have been written while on the way; but 'I have gone' possibly just means 'I am leaving right now''.

8 Note the occurrence of the adverb *nine* 'now' in *a nine eseme k tobě riboko poslale* 'And now I have sent you the fish'. The phrase is at the end of the letter, preceded by *a jas ti, ospodine, budu, a ja borzo budu* 'And I, lord, will be [there], I will be [there] soon'. Thus, it seems plausible to assume that the sender of the letter will come soon himself, but "now" he is (already) sending off the fish.

9 See also Gippius (2004: 220).

TABLE 12 *Cases of "epistolary past tense" on birchbark* (cont.)

No.	Date	Verb	Translation	Example
N937	1380–1400	*poslati*	send	(73)
N362	1380–1400	*poslati*	send	
N27	1380–1400	*poslati*[10]	send	
N536 (?)	1380–1400	*poslati*[11]	send	
N964	end of 14th c.	*poslati*	send	(71)
N413	1400–1410	*poslati*	send	(70)
N125 (?)	1400–1410	*dati*	give	
N963	1416–1421	*poslati* (2x)	send	
N243	1420–1430	*priti*	come	(80)

Gippius (2004, 205) offers the following interpretation for the use of the past tense form *rъklo*: "Форма перфекта оказывается [...] ориентированной на момент прочтения грамоты адресатом" 'The perfect form turns out to be oriented towards the moment at which the addressee reads the letter'. For the sender, the utterance "what he has said" lies in the future: Žirjata sends "this man" away with the instruction to take a certain amount of grain from Radjata. In his letter, he anticipates what "this man" is going to say to Radjata, and adapts the time frame to the moment when Radjata will be reading the letter. So, "this man" will go to Radjata and tell him to give the grain, and then show the letter as an authorization of what he just said. This is fully in line with the general gist of Gippius (2004), providing ample scope for the view that the letter served as the authorization of a spoken message which the letter-bearer pronounced in the name of the sender.

(80) Poklonъ ot Smenka ot Korělina. ***Prišle***, gne, t kobě na selo na Pytarevo. Cimъ jego žaluješь, i ty, ospdne, prikaži vsjakoje slovo. A jazъ tobě, svojemu gnu, colomъ běju.

10 See also Gippius (2004: 214): "Подразумеваемым объектом является в таких случаях гонец, несущий весть, или же сама эта весть" 'The implicit object in such cases is the messenger, who brings the message, or the message itself.'

11 The interpretation of the first occurrence of *poslati* depends on the reconstruction of the underlying first-person subject (see DND: 629).

> 'Greetings from Semenko the Karelian. [He] ***has come*** to you, lord, to Pytar's village. If you will grant him anything, then you, lord, give all the instructions. And I bow deeply to you, my lord.'
>
> N243 / 1420–1430 / DND, 674

This letter makes reference to a peasant who moves to the estate of another landlord. It is likely to be a "letter of recommendation", which the peasant took with him to his new lord. Thus, "he has come to you", would be an instance of the reader's temporal perspective being taken, as the act of coming still had to take place at the time of writing.

Finally, here is a vivid example from the GVNP parchment documents, which illustrates that the phenomenon is not restricted to the birchbark corpus:

(81) [...] A kto ***privezlъ*** gramotu siju, tomu very imite.

> '[...] and who ***has brought*** this letter, have trust towards him.'
>
> GVNP 36 / 1303–1307 / VALK 1949, 65

This is an indisputable instance of the reader's perspective being taken. The delivery of the letter is still future to the writer, but will be past to the reader.

Thus, the presence of the epistolary past tense in Old Russian and its interpretation along the lines of the reader's perspective would seem a nice confirmation of a phenomenon encountered elsewhere. The examples (79–81), in combination with the typological support from other languages, would seem to suggest that the other abovementioned examples (of the "sending" type) from the birchbark corpus should also be analyzed in these terms. But however elegant and attractive such an analysis might be, some substantial difficulties arise in this respect. I shall first introduce some theoretical terminology, and after that, I shall discuss these difficulties, which will eventually have to lead to a modification of the analysis in a number of cases.

7.5 Deixis

The phenomenon of the epistolary past tense can be embedded within the broader field of deixis. As Levinson (1983, 55) explains, "deixis concerns the encoding of many different aspects of the circumstances surrounding the utterance, in the utterance itself. Natural language utterances are thus "anchored" directly to aspects of the context". Thus, the first- and second-person pronouns can only be interpreted successfully if the identity of the speaker and addressee

is known. Similarly, the referent of demonstrative pronouns such as *this* and *that* is retrieved contextually, e.g. by means of gestures; in addition, spatial determiners like *here* or *there* require the interlocutors' location to be known. Finally, temporal expressions such as *now* or *yesterday* can only be interpreted in relation to the time of utterance. These are the three main categories of deixis, i.e. connected to person, place and time.

For our present topic, it is important to realize that temporal deixis can also be connected with the category of tense. After all, any event that is described is always viewed as lying in either the past, present or future, relative to the speech event. In normal, face-to-face conversation, the temporal perspectives of the speaker and hearer obviously coincide. However, communicative acts on birchbark are, by virtue of their epistolary nature, "dragged apart" into "encoding time" and "decoding time" (Fillmore 1971/1997, 61). Encoding time can be understood as the point at which the message is couched in writing, i.e. when the author writes or dictates the letter, whereas decoding time is the point at which the message is decoded from the written medium, i.e. when it is read by the addressee or read out aloud by the messenger. Taking into account the different temporal perspectives of the author and addressee, it follows that a choice has to be made: the temporal perspective of one of the participants has to be taken. The common accounts of the epistolary past tense treat it as a shift from encoding to decoding time. This is the same principle as the one encountered above, though now phrased in more theoretical terms.

Our main objections to the abovementioned common explanation in terms of the reader's perspective are connected with all three components of deixis, viz. spatial, temporal and personal. They will be dealt with in the following two subsections.

7.5.1 *The Spatial and Temporal Components*

Two considerations can be taken into account with regard to the spatial component: a demonstrative pronoun and verbal prefixes. As it happens, in many letters, the letter itself or the messenger is referred to by the proximal demonstrative pronoun *sei* 'this' (Mendoza 2002, 300), as was the case in (79) and (81). Now, to whose spatial perspective does this pronoun refer? Bearing in mind the division into encoding and decoding time, these notions can be extended by also distinguishing between "encoding and decoding place" (Fillmore 1971/1997, 82). After all, not only the temporal, but also the spatial deictics of the interlocutors are different: they find themselves at different places. The question is then: does the author take his own spatial perspective, or that of the reader? In (79), decoding time is given preference by means of the use of a past tense verb, but does this also apply to decoding place?

Interestingly, the demonstrative pronoun cannot give any decisive information about this. The pronoun is proximal, i.e. denotes an object which is "near", but the question is: near to whom? Are "this letter" or "this man" near to the author or to the addressee? The answer is: to both, but at different points in time. At encoding time, the letter and letter-bearer are near to the author, and at decoding time, they are near to the addressee. Thus, in this specific usage, the demonstrative pronoun is neutral as to the spatial origo.

But this is not the only parameter that can be analyzed in terms of spatial deixis. Crucially, certain verbal prefixes can confer a spatial (directional) component on verbs, too (more specifically, on motion verbs). Within the confines of the present topic, the relevant compositions are the prefixes *po-* and *pri-* and the verbs *slati* 'send' and *iti* 'go'.

Grenoble (1998, 47) describes the difference between the prefixes *po-* and *pri-* in present-day Russian as follows: "*po-* denoting the beginning of motion, or "setting-off," and *pri-* specifically denoting the end of motion, or arrival". This description provides a small and logical step to a temporal definition. After all, a movement must have a beginning and an end. In other words, the progress of movement towards the goal goes hand in hand with the lapse of time. We can say, then, that these prefixes have a spatio-temporal meaning.

A similar state of affairs existed in Old Russian. Sreznevskij translates *priiti* with words like "подойти, приблизиться, дойти, прибыть, прійти, явиться" 'approach, arrive, appear' (Sreznevskij 1893–1912/2, 1406); SRJa XI–XVII (19, 166) is even more explicit: "достигнуть, дойти до кого-л. или чего-л.; достигнуть места назначения" 'reach something or someone; reach one's destination'. All these words have the goal in mind. *Poiti*, on the other hand, is translated as "пойти, идти, выйти, уйти" 'go, leave, go away' (Sreznevskij 1893–1912/2, 1097–1098). These words express the point from which the movement starts, as becomes even clearer from SRJa XI–XVII (16, 137): "Начать перемещаться в определенном направлении пешком или по воде" 'begin to move in a certain direction on foot or by water'.

Similarly, the meaning of *poslati* is described as "приказать идти, послать (о лицѣ)" 'order to go, send (about a person)' (Sreznevskij 1893–1912/2, 1276), and "отправить кого-л. или что-л. с какой-л. целью; послать" 'send someone or something away for some purpose' (SRJa XI–XVII 17, 174). This, again, implies the beginning of the movement. *Prislati*, on the other hand, envisages the arrival of the sent person or items: "прислать, доставить" 'send, deliver' (Sreznevskij 1893–1912/2, 1469).

In more theoretical terms, these observations can be connected to deictic directionality by applying the notions "centrifugal" and "centripetal" (see Létoublon 1992, 270). Thus, *poiti* and *poslati* are centrifugal, i.e. they denote a

movement away from the deictic centre. *Priti* and *prislati*, on the other hand, are centripetal, denoting a movement towards the deictic centre. This directionality is attained by adding the prefixes to the otherwise deictically neutral verbal stems.

Now, what is the state of affairs to be detected in the birchbark corpus, regarding the prefixation of *slati* and *iti*? To begin with the latter, we can refer back to (80), discussed above. We pointed out that decoding time is taken, i.e. a prototypical example of the epistolary past tense. We can now see, by virtue of the prefix *pri-* in *prišle* 'has arrived', that decoding space is also taken. This is not surprising: if the reader's temporal perspective is taken, then surely also his spatial perspective. Otherwise, the deictic shift would only be partial. Nevertheless, we encounter examples like the following:

(82) + Ot Onufrьě kъ materi. ***Pošьlъ*** Petrъ kъ tebe, poemъ konь i mjatьlь Lazar(e)vъ. A vorotite konь i mjatьlь, a samogo posli sěmo. Ali ne poslešь, [a t]aku že mi věstь prisli. I poklanjaju ti sja i cěluju tja.

'From Onufrija to mother. Petr ***has gone*** to you, having taken Lazar's horse and coat. Return the horse and coat, and send [Petr] himself here. If you do not send [him], then send me a message. I bow to you and greet you.'

Torž.10 / 1200–1220 / DND, 452

If we suppose that this is an instance of the epistolary past tense, and that decoding time is taken, then we would expect the verbal prefix to take on decoding place, too, e.g. **prišьlъ Petrъ* 'Petr has arrived'. But the centrifugal prefix *po-* is used instead: "Petr has departed", i.e. he has set off on the way (away from the author). How can this be explained? Gippius (2004, 200) comments on this letter as follows:

> Обратим внимание, что перфект *пошьлъ* в данном случае обозначает действие, только имеющее совершиться, то есть мы имеем здесь дело с таким же переносным употреблением прошедшего времени, как и в современных записках вроде "ушел, буду через полчаса" или классического "ушла на базу".

> Note that the perfect form *pošьlъ* 'has gone' in this case denotes an act which just needs to be completed, i.e. we have to do here with exactly the same figurative use of the past tense as in present-day notes like "I have gone, will be back in half an hour" or the classical "I have gone to the warehouse."

So, when using *pošьlъ*, Onufrija apparently does not envisage Petr standing in front of his mother, but rather stresses Petr's departure from him. This means that he cannot have had the addressee's temporal perspective in mind either, because in that case he would also have shifted the spatial (directional) perspective by using the prefix *pri-*. Thus, the encoding space expressed by *po-* points to an interpretation of the use of the past tense form which does not allow a deictic shift to the decoding place and time of the reader.

If we now return to the "sending" statements, a similar conclusion has to be reached. Crucially, the form *prislalъ esmь* 'I have sent (centripetal)' does not occur on birchbark at all (see below, Table 13). This means that decoding place and time are never taken when a sending statement is made in the first person; the person or goods that are sent are seen from "a viewpoint which is disjunct from the deictic center" (Grenoble 1998, 49). So when *poslalъ esmь* is used, the deictic centre cannot belong to the addressee, but it must belong to the author, who views the goods as going away from him.

These considerations have several implications. To return to the question posed at the beginning of the article: What does the author have in mind when using the past tense, and, as we can add now, a centrifugal directional prefix? The common explanation has to be rejected for reasons mentioned above; no deictic shift is made, i.e. the deictics are not projected onto the reader. This leaves us with the following proposal: the author retains his own temporal as well as spatial perspective, i.e. encoding time and place. The use of the past tense can be explained as follows: the author has in mind (a) his decision to send the goods away; (b) the preparations that have been made for the dispatching of the goods; and (c) as far as he is concerned, the act is finished, and the letter is written to ratify the act of sending (see further below). Compare in this respect Heimpel & Guidi's (1969, 151, cited by Pardee & Whiting 1987, 27) observation about Akkadian epistolary usage of the past tense, functioning as the "Konstatierung einer mit Absendung des Briefes vollendeten Handlung" 'constatation of an act which is completed by the letter being sent off'.

So if we return to example (69), and reanalyze it in terms of encoding time, the following will have to be acknowledged: Grigorij has decided to send six barrels of wine. He has given instructions to his servants, to make the shipment ready. Thus, the barrels were ready to be shipped, and the only thing he needed to do was to write an accompanying letter, in which he "looks back" on his decision and the preparatory process, which is finished by the letter being written. The barrels are about to be sent off.

TABLE 13 *Occurrences of* poslati *and* prislati *on birchbark*

	poslati	*prislati*
1SG.PRES	6	1
1SG + 1PL.PERF	19	0
2SG.PRES	2	6
2SG.PERF	2	3
2SG.IMP	29	51
3SG.PRES	2	4
3SG + 3PL.PERF	4	1

7.5.2 *The Personal Component*

It should be borne in mind that there exists a crucial difference in personal deictics between (79), (80) and (81), and the other examples we have seen so far. In (79–81), the actor is a third person, whereas in the other letters, the actor is a first person, viz. the author himself.

So if a third person (specifically, the letter-bearer) is involved, the author can very well make a temporal shift to accommodate to the reader's perspective, i.e. decoding time is given precedence. In the case of "sending" statements in the first person the picture looks somewhat different: "sending" is, after all, an action accomplished by the author. It does not say "you have received", which would be the reader's part of the action.

The use of prefixes has a very strong tie with the category of person, and, by extension, communicative roles. The general tendency with respect to the verb "to send" in birchbark letters is that *pri-* has a preference for second and third person, and *po-* for first person. This reflects the orientation of their perspective towards, respectively, reader, side participant and author. A systematic presentation of the data on birchbark can be seen in Table 13.

Note that a centripetal verb like *prislati* can very well be used when the author constitutes the deictic centre. Thus, imperatives like *prisъli mi* 'send me' are quite common. So if a centripetal prefix like *pri-* is used, it is typically the author who is at the deictic centre (though there are some exceptions, such as (80) discussed above).

7.6 Performatives

In the preceding sections, we have argued that the use of the epistolary past tense in instances like (69) does not corroborate the hypothesis that the writer uses the past tense to take the perspective of the receiver (decoding time). We have identified two factors pointing to the prevalence of encoding time (i.e. the time in which the writing takes place) in certain instances of epistolary past tense usage, viz. directional verbal prefixes and person deixis. How, then, should the use of the past tense be explained? We have mentioned three reasons, concerning (a) decision; (b) preparations; (c) ratification. In this section we shall deal with the ratification (c): I shall argue that the use of the past tense may also have to do with the ceremonial character of the writing, i.e. writing as a way to ratify an act which is considered to be irreversible. As such, I shall show, the use of the epistolary past tense has a performative-like character in cases like (69).

In order to show this, let us go back to example (69). One question as to this letter remains: why did Grigorij write a letter at all? Why was oral communication not considered sufficient? This question becomes all the more pressing because the transaction appears to be a routine one, cf. NGB XII, 170: "Слова *продаи какъ и тѣ по тому же* ясно показывают, что автор и адресаты совершают данную торговую операцию не первый раз" 'The words *sell the lot like those others, under the same conditions* clearly show that the author and addressees make this commercial transaction not for the first time'. Apparently, Grigorij did not entirely trust the servants—after all, they were not supposed to take the money for the transaction. But if they were not to be trusted, who would guarantee that they would hand over the letter at all? They would have had to do so, if handing over a letter was an expected procedure. Otherwise, Jermola and Ozěkěj would have grown suspicious. So the letter seems to have functioned ceremonially, as well as practically. As such, the use of the past tense (*poslasmь* [PERF.M.1SG] *k tobě* 'I have sent to you') is to some extent reminiscent of a performative act.

The main principle of a performative utterance is that it establishes the act by uttering it, e.g. promising, baptizing, betting, etc. Interestingly, various ancient languages express such performatives by a verbal form in the past tense (e.g. Rogland 2001, 244). By and large, the data on birchbark also conform to this pattern, i.e. the perfect tense is used, for instance in the incipit formula of a testament:

(83) Se azo, rabo B͡ži Selivьstro, ***napsaxъ*** roukopisanije [...]

> 'Hereby I, God's servant Selivestr, ***have written*** a testament. [...]'
> N138 / 1300–1320 / DND, 533

An example of a non-formulaic past tense performative is the following:

(84) Ivanjaja ***molovila*** Fimь: Ljubo kounь vosoli, pak li dorgo prodaju.

> 'Ivan's wife ***has said*** to Fima: You either send the money, or I will demand that a large fine is imposed on you.'
> St.R.11 / 1160–1180 / DND, 446

It is obvious that Ivan's wife has not said this to Fima before, in which case this letter would be a mere reminder. The only way in which the letter gets communicative relevance is to assume a performative interpretation of the perfect tense, as proposed in DND (175, 447): "Hereby (by means of this letter), Ivan's wife is telling Fima as follows: [...]." A second consideration is that Ivan's wife may have instructed a scribe to write this message down. In that case, from the scribe's perspective, Ivan's wife has already said this, though not directly to Fima, but dictating it to the scribe. As far as Ivan's wife is concerned, however, the action is completed.

Now, how can the abovementioned insights into the use of the epistolary past tense be connected with performatives? Of course, it is first and foremost the use of the past tense that connects cases like "I have sent to you six barrels of wine" with "I have written a testament". But we can also analyze them in the same way, viz. by considering the author's perspective at encoding time. Again, the author looks back on (a) his decision to accomplish the act; (b) the preparations that have been made. In addition, (c) the act is ratified in a ceremonial way by committing a record of it to writing. The past tense is used because of its retrospective force: the act has just been accomplished, it is irreversible now. The letter functions as a final wrap-up of the act, which cannot be undone.

Note that the letter itself does not effectuate the act, it only ratifies it. The term "performative" should therefore be used with caution. Pardee & Whiting consider epistolary past tense verbal usages (in Akkadian) to be "constatives", rather than "performatives" (1987, 28); "they report an act rather than effecting one" (ibid., 30). Many written instances labelled "performatives" also have a reporting, and at the same time ratifying character. For instance, performatives encountered in the Novgorod and Pskov parchment documents (GVNP) describe land or privileges granted to persons or institutions. They can be analyzed in the same way as the abovementioned examples, viz. the author refers

to his decision to grant something to someone, as well as to the fact that it has irreversibly been accomplished by that decision, and thus, for the author's part, the act has been completed; the written fixation is only a ratification, not the act itself. Thus, the use of past tense forms is not surprising at all and the ceremonial ratification of official acts of granting, bequeathing, etc. can be compared to the equally conventionalized ratification of the sending of goods.[12]

7.7 Ancient Greek Revisited

The above claims about the epistolary past tense may come as a surprise to the mind of those who are used to this phenomenon in the classical languages. Nevertheless, we can point to some provisional external evidence—viz. from Greek. Two examples, both from the New Testament, will be put forward, which highlight two of the aspects of the above discussion, viz. temporal and spatial (directional) deixis. The first example will show that "to send" can be past for the author by the time he writes the letter, and the second example will show that Greek also has a spatial component, though not on the verb "to send" (i.e. the Greek spatial marking on verbs by means of prefixes seems to be less pervasive than in Old Russian), which leads to a similar conclusion as the one we have drawn regarding Old Russian.

The first example, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, requires some clarification of its background. At a certain point, when Paul is in prison, the Jews plan to catch him in an ambush and kill him. The chief captain Claudius Lysias hears about this plot and orders his men to send Paul at night from Jerusalem to the governor in Caesarea. He writes an accompanying letter:

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12 It should be mentioned, for completeness's sake, that the present tense also occurs in performative-like contexts:

(1) Se azъ, rabъ Bžii Mosii, ***pišju*** rukopisanije pri svojemъ živo […]
'Hereby I, God's servant Mosei, ***write*** a testament at (the end of) my life. […]'
(N519/520 / 1400–1410 / DND: 653)

The word *se* often occurs together with formulaic performatives as in (83), but it can also be used with an epistolary past tense, thus testifying to the close relationship between the two types of verbal usage:

(2) + Ot Dьjaka i ot Ilьkě. Se ***posъlaxově***-[AOR.DU] […]
'From the deacon and from Il'ka. Hereby ***the two of us have sent*** […]'
(N842 / 1120–1140 / DND: 311)

(Note that Zaliznjak (DND: 398) claims the existence of two different meanings of *se*: a "bookish" one that goes with performatives, and a "neutral" one meaning "вот" 'look'.)

(85) Κλαύδιος Λυσίας τῷ κρατίστῳ ἡγεμόνι Φήλικι χαίρειν. ***Τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον*** συλληφθέντα ὑπό τῶν Ἰουδαίων [...]. μηνυθείσης δέ μοι επιβουλῆς εἰς ***τὸν ἄνδρα*** μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἐξαυτῆς ***ἔπεμψα***-AOR.IND.1SG πρός σε, [...].

'Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix [sendeth] greeting. ***This man*** was taken of the Jews [...]. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for ***the man***, I ***sent*** straightway to thee, [...]' (KJV).

Acts of the Apostles 23:26–27, 30

The first parallel with the data on birchbark is that the phrase "this man" indicates someone who is sent along with the letter, i.e. to whom the letter "belongs". Crucially, there is not only a letter, but also the advantage of a surrounding narrative, which makes some of the circumstances explicit in which the letter played its part. Thus, it is clearly indicated in the surrounding narrative that Paul ("this man") is sent to Felix with this *accompanying* letter. Furthermore, and most importantly, it becomes clear from the preceding narrative that Claudius Lysias (a) took the decision and (b) gave his men orders to send Paul to Felix (vv. 23–24) before he (c) wrote the letter (v. 25) to ratify these acts. In that sense, the act of sending was completed for him, and the letter served as a ceremonial addendum. This would lend support to our claim regarding the primacy of encoding time: Claudius Lysias looks back on his decision and the preparations he has ordered to be made. Subsequently, he writes the letter to complete and ratify the act of sending. Interestingly, both the Living Bible and Today's English Version translate verse 30 as "I decided to send him" (cf. Werner 1985, 37), which clearly has this retrospective element that our analysis proposes.[13]

A second example from the New Testament concerns the spatial (directional) component of the verbal prefix ἐξ-, similar to the Old Russian examples encountered above (cf. especially (82), *pošьlъ*):

(86) ὅτι τὴν μὲν παράκλησιν ἐδέξατο, σπουδαιότερος δὲ ὑπάρχων αὐθαίρετος ***ἐξῆλθεν*** [AOR.IND.3SG] πρὸς ὑμᾶς. ***συνεπέμψαμεν*** [AOR.IND.1PL] δὲ μετ' αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀδελφὸν [...].

'For indeed he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward of his own accord he ***went*** unto you. And ***we have sent*** with him the brother [...]' (KJV).

Second Epistle to the Corinthians 8:17–18

13 Interestingly, the present tense can be used in a spoken utterance: *καθώς ἀπέσταλκέ με*

The most attractive interpretation is to treat these verbs as instances of the epistolary past tense. Some modern translations indeed do so: "[…] he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother […]" (New Revised Standard Version).

But what is most interesting in this case is that ἐξῆλθεν, like *pošьlъ*, contains a deictic directional element. As Létoublon (1992, 270–271) points out, the unprefixed aorist stem ἦλθον is centripetal (i.e. "I came" (here)). When adding the prefix ἐξ-, however, the meaning of the verb is "I went away, I left". Thus, by virtue of its being prefixed, ἐξῆλθεν can be considered a centrifugal verb: "he has departed". This would have the same implications as those I described above for Old Russian, viz. that there cannot be a deictic shift towards the reader's perspective. The use of the aorist here must, then, stem from what I described above as the author's perspective at encoding time, i.e. (a) the decision has been taken, (b) preparations have been made, and (c) the action is considered near-complete, and ratified by the letter. Recall Gippius (2004, 200): "действие, только имеющее совершиться" 'an act which just needs to be completed'. Thus, even in Greek, not every example necessarily fits into the standard treatment of the epistolary past tense.

7.8 Concluding Remarks

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: can the traditional "epistolary" interpretation of past tense forms be justified in the case of Old Russian, and to what extent is the use of the past tense in instances like these motivated by a mindset of oral communication? As we have seen, not all instances that can at first sight be analyzed as epistolary past tense are really of the same kind as those well-known examples from other languages. The data on birchbark have some complicating elements, which render an analysis in terms of the prevalence of decoding time impossible in quite a few instances. It remains to be seen to what extent the insights acquired by the investigation of the data on birchbark can be extended and applied to the data in e.g. Greek, Latin and the Semitic languages, although a first glance at (85) and (86) appears promising in this respect.

I certainly do not deny the existence of those instances that have traditionally been called "epistolary past tense", which can be analyzed in terms of

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ὁ πατήρ, κἀγώ πέμπω ὑμᾶς 'as [my] Father hath sent me, even so ***send*** I you' (John 20:21, KJV). More research would be needed to explore this topic.

the reader's temporal perspective. What I am trying to say, though, is that not all instances on birchbark are open to this line of analysis. More particularly, we have seen examples in which the beginning of a motion is envisaged—therefore a centrifugal verb is used. The use of the past tense then expresses that (a) the author refers back to his decision to send; (b) the author also looks back upon the process of preparation; (c) in addition, the letter is a ratification of the decision and preparations.

This use of the past tense is typical for Old Russian and other older script cultures. This led to the hypothesis that it may be understood as a communicative peculiarity of earlier stages of the development of literacy, in which case it can be considered a manifestation of orality. Is this really the case? It is here that the topic can be connected to the main research question of this study. It can be posited that switching the reference point to the future is more typical for contexts where the communication between the speaker and the hearer (addressee) is not direct, as in oral communication, but mediated by script (writing), whereas at the same time the written communication is less conventionalized and partly leans on oral communication. There are two ways in which authors can try to overcome the temporal and spatial distance of this new and still unusual way of communication. Firstly, in some cases the author takes an egocentric perspective (encoding time), using the past tense to indicate that for him (or her) the decision to complete the action has been taken, ignoring as it were, that writing something down does not mean that the action as a whole has been completed, i.e. ignoring the distance in time and space. This is most clearly illustrated by performative-like sentences such as (84), but, as has been argued, it also plays a role in cases such as (69). Secondly, the speaker may also anticipate the perspective of the addressee (decoding time), as if the letter equals a person who is directly talking to the addressee at the moment when the letter is being read. Even though these perspectives seem contradictory, what they have in common is that the writing heavily leans on an orally-oriented communicative "mindset". The distinction between orality and literacy, as it is perceived in modern times in terms of deixis and referential perspective, is somehow blurred.

Compared to the other case studies, the connection to orality in this one is somewhat more tentative. The line of reasoning followed in this chapter may need to be confirmed by further research. In any case, the investigation of the epistolary past tense has led me to extend the research to the next case study (about assertive declarations), in which the use of the past tense in performative-like expressions is examined. As will be shown in the next chapter, past tense performatives can more easily be linked to the notion of orality.

CHAPTER 8

Case Study IV: Assertive Declarations

8.1 Introduction

In our discussion of the epistolary past tense (chapter 7), we already noted a relationship between the use of the past tense and orality in certain instances. In the present case study, we shall continue our investigations into the use of past tenses (perfect and aorist) in cases that have been analyzed, by Zaliznjak (DND) and others, as performatives. I shall first present an example, on the basis of which a number of questions can be asked:

(87) Ot Sьmьjuna. Sь ***vozjalo esmь*** u Xrarja zadnicju Šibьnьsьvu. A bolь nь nadobě nikomu.

'From Sem'jun. Hereby ***I have taken*** from Xrar' the inheritance of Šibenec. And for the rest nobody has any claims over it.'

N198 / 1260–1280 / DND, 492

If this is indeed a performative (i.e. the action is performed by pronouncing the utterance), it should be interpreted as "I hereby take the inheritance", or in other words "I call it mine." It would follow from this that it is a declaration, on the basis of which Sem'jun claims his rights over the inheritance. But this birchbark letter evokes a number of questions regarding the use of the past tense. We would probably expect a different verbal tense here. And what kind of a speech act is this? Is it really a performative? These are some questions that arise in connection with this letter; we shall see more examples of a similar kind in the rest of this chapter.

In the previous chapter (§ 7.6) we already touched on the concept of "performativity". We noted that performatives are *not* identical to instances of the epistolary past tense. The main principle of a performative utterance is that it establishes the act by uttering it, e.g. promising, baptizing, betting, etc. Interestingly, various ancient languages express performatives by a verbal form in the past tense (cf. e.g. Rogland 2001, 244). So it remains to be seen whether our example (87) and further examples to be presented below should also be interpreted as performatives. Does the past tense not prevent such an interpretation?

A claim has in fact been made by Zaliznjak that the perfect tense can be used for performatives (or near-performatives) in Old Russian:

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> Специализированный частный случай исходного значения перфекта составляет перформативное (или близкое к таковому) значение, проявляющееся прежде всего в начальных формулах официальных актов.
>
> DND, 175

> A specific, particular instance of the basic meaning of the perfect is the performative (or near-performative) meaning, which mainly appears in initial formulas of official documents.

Zaliznjak (ibid.) gives the following examples, first from documents on parchment, and then on birchbark:

(88) † Se azъ Mьstislavъ, Volodimirь synъ, dьrža rusьsku zemlju, vъ svoe knjaženie ***povelělъ esmь*** [PERF.M.1SG] synu svoemu Vsevolodu otdati Bouicě svjatomu Georgievi [...]

'Hereby I, Mstislav, son of Vladimir, ruling the Russian land, in my princely power ***have ordered*** my son Vsevolod to give Buice to [the monastery of] St. George [...]'

GVNP 81, Mstislavova gramota / c. 1130 / VALK 1949, 140

(89) Se ***vъdale*** [PERF.M.SG] Varlame stmou Spsou zemlju i ogorodъ i [...]

'Hereby Varlaam ***has given*** to [the monastery of] the Holy Saviour the land and the yard and [...]'

Varlaamova gramota / 1192–1210 / DND, 458

(90) Ivanjaja ***molovila*** Fimь: ljubo kounь vosoli, pak li dorgo prodaju.

'Ivan's wife ***has said*** to Fima: You either send the money, or I will demand that a large fine is imposed on you.'

St.R.11 / 1160–1180 / DND, 446

(91) Oto Petra ko Kouzme. Jazo tobe, bratou svojemu, ***prikazale*** pro sebe tako: ourjadilo li sja so toboju ci li ne ourjadilosja, ti ty so Drociloju po somolove pravi. A jazo sja klaneju.

'From Petr to Kuz'ma. I ***have instructed*** [i.e. hereby instruct] you, my brother, concerning ourselves as follows: whether he has made an ar-

rangement with you or has not made an arrangement, you execute [it] with Dročila according to the agreement. And I bow down.'

N344 / 1300–1320 / DND, 526

It remains somewhat unclear whether these examples really contain performatives in the strict sense of the term. If they do, that would be somewhat strange to our present-day minds. Zaliznjak also remains a bit vague when speaking about "near-performatives". All in all, the picture from which we start is anything but clear.

The question to be asked in this chapter is whether the reason for the use of the past tense in these instances should be sought in the area of orality versus literacy. It can be hypothesized that the use of the past tense in these instances has to do with a different role of the written word than is customary in our modern use of writing. If it can be shown that this is the case, the topic will contribute towards answering the main research question by providing one more manifestation of an oral component in birchbark communication.

Let us first have a closer look at the available theories about the concept of performativity (§ 8.2). After that, we can start analyzing the use of verbal tenses in performatives in Old Russian birchbark letters (§ 8.3) and in a few other ancient languages (§ 8.4), and we shall see whether we can analyze the abovementioned examples as performatives, too. Zooming in on the past tense examples, we shall consider most of them (such as (88–90)) to be "assertive declarations" (a concept developed in the theory of Searle (1975) which will be discussed in § 8.2.2). § 8.5 will provide a further discussion and elaborate on the question in what way the discussion of these examples (as assertive declarations) can contribute to our general topic of orality and literacy.

8.2 Theoretical Considerations

Austin (1962) is often credited for the discovery of the concept of performativity; and indeed, the term "performative" was coined by him. But many years before him, other researchers identified the same phenomenon, though describing it in somewhat different terms. Koschmieder (1930) is sometimes mentioned as the original discoverer of the phenomenon,[1] which he termed "*Koinzidenzfall*" and which he described as

1 It is sometimes stressed (e.g. Wagner 1997: 62) that Koschmieder's *Koinzidenzfall* and Austin's performative, due to the different theoretical paradigms from which they proceed, cannot be

> die echte Koinzidenz von Wort und Tat. Sie liegt dann vor, wenn die im Verbum ausgedrückte Handlung durch den Ausspruch des Verbums erfolgt, wenn Tun und Sprechen dasselbe ist.
>
> ibid., 352

> the real coincidence of word and deed. It occurs when the act which is expressed by the verb takes place by uttering the verb, when doing and speaking is the same.

Koschmieder (ibid., 353) gives the following example, and notes the connection of *Koinzidenzfall* with "das Wörtchen *hiermit*" 'the little word *hereby*':

(92) Hiermit ***bitte*** ich die Herrschaften zu Tisch.

> 'I hereby ***ask*** the gentlemen [to sit down] at table.'
> [In more natural English: 'Dinner is served!'][2]

But before Koschmieder, Škrabec (1903, 555) already describes the "*praesens effectivum*", which seems to boil down to the same concept, viz. a present tense "das die Handlung nicht nur bezeichnet, sondern eben durch das Aussprechen des betreffenden Verbums zugleich vollzieht" 'which not only names the action, but which even performs it at the same time by uttering the verb in question' (translation by Verschueren 1995, 300).[3]

Škrabec's designation "*praesens effectivum*" indicates that he perceives a connection with the present tense. Indeed, in most present-day European languages, the performative is realized with a present tense form. "First-person present indicative" has often been regarded as a standard characteristic of performative verbs (e.g. Austin 1962, 61, Dickey 2000, 175–176, Hindelang 2010, 26). This may be true for English and the modern Slavic languages, but it is exactly the universality of present tense performatives that seems to be

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said to represent the same phenomenon. Considerations like these are far beyond the scope of the present case study.

2 Thus, in English this is normally expressed as an implicit performative (directive), whereas in German it is explicit (with a performative verb); see below for more about these terms.

3 But even Škrabec was not the first to notice this phenomenon. As Procházka & Bsees (2015: 293) state, "the Arab grammarians had developed a similar concept almost a millennium before Austin's study appeared". See § 8.4.1 for a brief discussion of performatives in Arabic and other Semitic languages.

challenged by Old Russian data. This is the main topic of the present chapter, to be discussed in more detail below. But before doing so, we need to review some more theoretical considerations, mainly given by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975), which will serve as a basis for the further discussion.

8.2.1 *Austin*

The first distinction Austin (1962) makes is that between "constatives" and "performatives". When uttering a constative, a statement or description is made about a state of affairs that exists in the world. Performative utterances, on the other hand,

> A. [...] do not "describe" or "report" or constate anything at all, are not "true or false"; and
> B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something.
>
> AUSTIN 1962, 5

According to Austin (1962, 57), a useful diagnostic criterion for a performative (in English) is that the word "hereby" can be inserted (note that it does not necessarily have to occur). Austin (ibid.) mentions some performative utterances, which have become the most prototypical and classical examples:

(93) I ***name*** this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*. (as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem)

(94) I ***give*** and ***bequeath*** my watch to my brother. (as occurring in a will)

(95) I hereby ***pronounce*** you husband and wife.

The abovementioned examples (93–95) are all "explicit" performatives, which means that they contain an explicit performative verb (in bold italics in the examples). Thus, in pronouncing the utterance, be it accompanied by a ritual act or not, the action is accomplished. The counterpart to these explicit performatives are "implicit" performatives. Where (96) would be an explicit performative, (97) is its implicit (and more naturally occurring) equivalent (Austin 1962, 32):

(96) I ***order*** you to go.

(97) Go!

But in this way, any utterance can actually be labelled an implicit performative, which led Austin to finally give up the dichotomy constative-performative. The term "performative" has remained to be widely used in linguistics (usually to refer to explicit performatives), though its counterpart "constative" has largely been abandoned.

8.2.2 *Searle*

In its broadest sense, then, "performative" would refer to *any* utterance, which would make the term redundant. Following Searle (1989, 536), when referring to "performatives", I mean only those that Austin calls "explicit performatives", i.e. those that contain a performative verb (in bold italics in the examples).

Searle (1975, 1979) provides a more sophisticated follow-up to Austin's (1962) theory. He divides illocutionary acts into five basic categories, viz. assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations (1975; 2010, 69).[4] Crucially, he also distinguishes a sixth, mixed category, viz. the class of assertive declarations. In order to elucidate these concepts, it will be useful to cite a short definition and present an English example for each of the classes, both for explicit and implicit illocutionary acts.

But first another of Searle's notions needs to be introduced here, viz. "direction of fit". It involves the idea that an utterance can either serve to match the propositional content of the illocution (the word) to the state of affairs in the world (word-to-world direction of fit, indicated below by ↓), or vice versa, to make the state of affairs in the world match the propositional content of the illocution (world-to-word direction of fit, indicated by ↑). This is one of the parameters that Searle uses for distinguishing among his classes of illocutionary speech acts. Another characteristic is the *point* of the utterance, i.e. what it serves for. Both parameters will be mentioned below for each class of speech acts (based on Searle 2010, 69), together with an example of an explicit and implicit speech act.

The point of **representatives** (statements, descriptions, assertions, etc.) is "to represent how things are"; later on, Searle (1979, 12) changes the name of this class to **assertives** (without ever commenting on this change) and states that their point is "to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to the truth of the expressed proposition" (ibid.). It is this later term and definition that will be followed here. Assertives have the word-to-world direction of fit ↓:

4 Austin (1962) already presents a classification into five categories, which differs from Searle's (1975). Austin's classification is not taken into account here, as it does not provide us with more insights than Searle's classification, which is usually taken to have superseded Austin's.

(98) a. I ***describe*** John as a Fascist.
b. John is a Fascist.

The speaker describes John as a fascist (word) because he believes him to be one (world). There is a certain situation in the world, to which the speaker conforms his utterance.

The point of **directives** (orders, commands, requests, etc.) is "to try to get other people to do things"; they have the world-to-word direction of fit ↑:

(99) a. I ***order*** you to leave the room.
b. Leave the room!

The speaker orders the addressee to leave the room (word) because he wants to cause him to actually leave (world), i.e. the speaker wants to change the world by and towards his word.

The point of **commissives** (promises, vows, pledges, etc.) is "to commit the speaker to some course of action"; they also have the world-to-word direction of fit ↑:

(100) a. I ***promise*** to come and see you.
b. I will come and see you.

The speaker promises the addressee to come (word) because he wants to commit himself to actually coming (world). Thus, he intends to make true in the world what he says in the utterance (word).

The point of **expressives** (apologies, thanks, congratulations, etc.) is "to express the speaker's feelings and attitudes about a state of affairs that is in most cases presupposed to exist already"; there is no direction of fit:

(101) a. I ***apologize*** for stepping on your toe.
b. I'm sorry (for stepping on your toe)!

We cannot analyze these examples in terms of the influence they exert on the world or vice versa.

Declarations, "remarkably, have both directions of fit at once. In a declaration we make something the case by declaring it to be the case":

(102) a. I ***declare*** the meeting adjourned.
b. The meeting is (hereby) adjourned.

Declarations have a double direction of fit ↕: both world-to-word and word-to-world. They fit the world and the word fully to each other, so that world and word coincide. Something is made the case by saying that it is the case, and therefore, it is the case. As Searle & Vanderveken (1985, 53–54) state, "[i]n a declarative illocution the speaker makes the world match the propositional content simply by saying that the propositional content matches the world". This will turn out to be the most interesting and complicated category in our discussion.

Searle (1975, 360) realizes that there can be overlap between assertives and declarations, so that he coins the mixed class of "**representative declarations**" (1975, 361), which he later renames "**assertive declarations**" (1979, 20). This mixed class covers instances in which a statement can be made about a past event, which at the same time ratifies this event, i.e. lends it authority and makes it definitive. So this class has two directions of fit: the word-to-world and the double direction of fit ↓↕:

(103) a. I ***declare*** you guilty.
b. You are guilty.

The addressee was guilty before the judge pronounced this utterance, but the judge's utterance now makes him institutionally guilty, i.e. it changes his status before court from a defendant to an offender or convict, due to the authority of the judge within the institution. When the judge declares him guilty, he is not only making an observation about a fact in the world, but by his utterance also creating a new situation that has consequences for the world, while at the same time defining the state of affairs in the world. In other words, the speaker tells what the facts are (assertive), but at the same time he declares authoritatively that these are the facts, and they *are* the facts because he says they are (declaration). In order to be invested with such authority, an institution is needed; we shall come back to this point below, applying it to the authority of the written word. The assertive declarations are a "mixed" speech act class that occurs abundantly in the GVNP parchment documents, but also on birchbark, as we shall see. This class will play an important role in our further discussion. In fact, most of our past tense examples will be analysed as assertive declarations.

Later on, Searle pursues his line of thought even further and abandons much of his erstwhile theory by stating that all explicit performatives are declarations (Searle & Vanderveken 1985; Searle 1989). Others, such as Harnish (2002) and Martinich (2002), provide convincing counterarguments to this claim. I will stick to Searle's original theory and disregard his later diversions from it. We

shall see, however, that some tendency towards his later "declarational" theory is indeed understandable and possibly even justified; his "mixed class" of assertive declarations may have served as a step towards this later theory.

8.3 The Data on Birchbark

Now, to what extent can Searle's five classes of illocutionary acts in general, and assertive declarations in particular, be detected in the birchbark corpus? It may be good to repeat that we will stick purely to *explicit* performatives. A few examples will be put forward at this point, ordered by their class; more precise numbers will be presented later (§ 8.3.3). First of all, assertives, declarations and assertive declarations will be delineated. Following on that, examples from the other classes will be reviewed; this overview will serve to outline the extent to which examples on birchbark can be analysed as assertive declarations. In addition, it will allow us to place these examples into the broader framework of speech act theory as a whole.

8.3.1 *Assertives and Declarations*

Assertives and declarations are sometimes difficult to distinguish categorically (hence the addition of a mixed class by Searle), so that some words need to be devoted to this issue. Some of the examples on birchbark can easily be identified, but others are hard to tell apart, and the present author hereby proposes that, crucially, considerations of orality and literacy play a role in this matter, too. Let us start the discussion by considering an example:

(104) Sь ***stalь bьšь*** [PPF.SG.M] Kouzma na Zdylou i na Domažirovica. Torgovala esta sьlomь bьz mьnь, a ja za to sьlo porouсnь. I rozvьli estь сьljadь i skotinou i kobylь i rožь, a Domažirь poběglь nь otkoupivъ ou Vjacьslava iz dolgou. […]

'Hereby Kuz'ma ***had accused*** [i.e. accuses] Sdyla and Domažirovič. You (two) have traded the village without me, but I am the warrantor of that village. You have divided the servants and the cattle and the mares and the rye, and Domažir has run away, without having ransomed [property] from Vjačeslav from the debt. […]'

N510 / 1220–1240 / DND, 470

This example is somewhat less typical, in that it shows the use of a pluperfect, rather than the perfect, as encountered above. Gippius (2004, 223) considers it a

reflection of a legal procedure: "Настоящим Кузьма обвиняет Сдылу и Домажировича" 'Hereby Kuz'ma accuses Sdyla and Domažirovič'. On the basis of this, Zaliznjak concludes that "⟨*стале бѣше*⟩ выступает здесь в перформативном употреблении, как *моловила* в грамоте Ст. Р. 11" '*stale běše* occurs here in performative use, like *molovila* in St.R.11' (DND, 470).[5] The present tense translation reflects their analysis of the pluperfect form as a performative.

But let us take a step back and analyse this utterance. Is it an assertive or a declaration? Is the utterance meant to change reality (world-to-word fit)? If it were just an assertive, not really. It might be just an explicit formulation of Kuz'ma's opinion about the two gentlemen. But if the utterance functions as a declaration, within a social institution, it also changes the world. Because of this accusation, Sdyla and Domažirovič now find themselves as the subjects of a legal procedure. This is the double direction of fit. More remains to be said about assigning this and similar utterances to a class of illocutionary acts (cf. the following subsection).[6]

Declarations are the most prototypically performative utterances, which may be the reason why Searle & Vanderveken (1985) decided to view all performatives as declarations. They have a double direction of fit, i.e. they are uttered in accordance with a situation in the world, but at the same time are intended

5 Searle & Vanderveken (1985: 190) put the English verb *to accuse* under the heading of assertives. However, if the letter indeed functions in a legal procedure, it belongs rather to the category of declarations. What this teaches us is, among other things, that one and the same performative verb can belong to different classes of illocutionary acts when occurring in different contexts.

6 A radically different interpretation of this letter has been provided by Petruxin (2013). In his theory, one of the functions of the pluperfect (supercompound past) is that of anti-resultative, i.e. the result is cancelled. Crucially, it can also function performatively, so that the speaker not just asserts that a situation or action has been cancelled, but by making the utterance he actually cancels the action. Under such an interpretation, the first sentence of N510 "Hereby Kuz'ma had accused Sdyla and Domažirovič" would be meant to imply "he hereby states that he lifts his accusation". Thus, Kuz'ma declares that his former declaration is no longer valid, which comes down to a new declaration, viz. "hereby our case has been settled". It settles institutionally that Sdyla and Domažirovič are freed from prosecution.

Note that this function is not in contrast to the traditional interpretation of the pluperfect, viz. as a "преждепрошедшее" 'before-past' (Kolesov 2009: 288). If the perfect is used for performatives, then it is logical that the pluperfect should be used for performatives that took place in the past.

However, N510 lacks context, as Petruxin (2013: 86–87) also notes, so that a decisive consolidation of his theory for this particular instance cannot be made.

to change the world by the utterance. The "harvest" of true declarations on birchbark is quite meagre. It is often even unclear whether they are declarations at all. Some examples at least seem to come close:

(105) Se ***kupilo*** Mixalo u knzja velikogo Boroce u Vasilija Odrejana Kuzneca i Tokovu i Ostrovnu i Rotkovici Kodracja i Vedrovo. ***Da*** 2 rublja, i 3 griny daste Jakovъ. Atno se zaměšete Mixaly bratu jeg daste serebro dvoje.

'Hereby Mixal ***has bought*** from Vasilij, the great prince's tax collector, Odrejan the blacksmith and [the villages] Tokova, Ostrovna, Rokoviči Kodrača and Vedrovo. [Mixal] ***has given*** 2 roubles, and Jakov will give 3 grivnas. If any damage will occur, [the one who is guilty] shall pay the double amount to Mixal and his brother.'

N318 / 1340–1360 / DND, 611

We see the particle *se*, in combination with a past tense *kupilo*. Should it be concluded that *se kupilo Mixalo* 'hereby Mixal has bought' is a performative? If applying the strict criterion, saying has to be identical to acting. Is this the case? Does saying "I hereby buy" actually execute the transaction of buying? And what if it is not said but written down? Does the utterance constitute the act itself (declaration), or is it merely a record of a previously executed act (assertive)? It is here that the extra, mixed class of assertive declarations can come in. In any case, answering these questions requires a more thorough investigation of the connection between this type of performatives and considerations of orality and literacy.

8.3.2 *Assertives or Declarations? Orality or Literacy?*

How can we decide about the assignment of examples to the class of assertives or declarations? Crucially, the instances in (104) and (105) should be seen as part of a greater institutional or ceremonial context. The accusation is part of a legal procedure, and the letter about the purchase of land is part of a transaction. Thus, an utterance as accompanied by an act together constitute the final act. The utterance and the whole act are interrelated: there is an initial action and its final ratification by the utterance.[7] This statement is in need of some more discussion.

7 Hillers (1995) calls attention to a slightly different case in Ancient Hebrew. "In Exod[us] 21:5, *'hbty 't 'dny* 'I love my master …' should probably be considered a performative […]. It perhaps qualifies as a performative because this is a declaration of loyalty, not simply a description of emotions, and it is a significant part of a legal transaction, initiating a rite of perpetual

The function of the type of utterance we are considering is to ratify an act, which is done by pronouncing (or writing down) a formula. Note that the formula is not necessarily a literal rendition of the act; "I hereby take" does not mean that you take it, but that you ratify an act of appropriation that has just been accomplished (cf. the past tense). The past tense seems best suited for these performatives (it has all three elements (a-c) that we identified in chapter 7 for the epistolary past tense, too).[8] Let us come back to the initial example of this chapter:

(87) Ot Sьmьjuna. Sь ***vozjalo esmь*** u Xrarja zadnicju Šibьnьsьvu. A bolь nь nadobě nikomu.

'From Semjun. Hereby ***I have taken*** from Xrar' the inheritance of Šibenec. And for the rest nobody has any claims over it.'

N198 / 1260–1280 / DND, 492

The "taking" could have taken place without writing it down, but this document serves as a ratification. Though strictly speaking it is not part of the act itself, it supports the act. In one sense, it is a standard use of the past tense, but in another sense, the act has become institutionally definitive only with the writing down of this message. These two aspects constitute the essence of the category of assertive declarations, so that this example can be compared to (103). This is a line of thinking that will be pursued further below (§ 8.5). As to this example, the document serves as proof for Xrar' that he is no longer liable and responsible for the inheritance.

So performatives can be accompanied by a (ritual) act, without which the performative would have been infelicitous. For example, when naming a ship ("I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*") without smashing the bottle against

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enslavement. We should understand it as the equivalent of something like: 'I hereby pledge my allegiance to my master, wife and children; I do not wish to be freed'" (Hillers 1995: 764–765).

By pronouncing this formula, an act is accomplished. But it is not the same act as is actually described by the verb, so strictly speaking it is not performative. Its function is, however, reminiscent of performatives, whose definition we might stretch to accommodate instances like this one.

8 Recall that we identified the following reasons for the use of the past tense: a) the author looks back on his decision to send a person or goods; b) the author also looks back on the preparations that have been made towards the sending; c) by writing the letter, the author considers the act of sending finished; he ratifies it.

the stem, the performative is infelicitous. Thus, the performative is dependent on an accompanying act; but still, it is considered to be a performative.

Can we reason the same way in the case of purchasing? You can say "I hereby purchase" (a declaration), but in order to take effect, the utterance has to be accompanied by the necessary financial transaction. Still, the utterance can be seen as performative, even though it does not constitute the only or even the main part of the act (payment). The chief function of the utterance is that of ratification.

Now, what is the connection with orality and literacy? Let us stick to the purchase transaction connected with (105). If the transaction was executed before the document was written, it must have been an oral transaction. The document is then a record of the transaction, and the past tense is used in its prototypical meaning. The illocutionary act is then an implicit assertive: "(I inform you that) I have bought …" with the word-to-world direction of fit (cf. the Old English examples in § 8.4.4). It is a record of a state of affairs that has come about in the world, independently of the document. In this respect, the use of the past tense is completely expected and understandable.

The other side of the coin is that because of the existence of the document the transaction takes effect and is ratified. This would point to a world-to-word direction of fit: the world is changed by the utterance. Because of the utterance in the document, the enumerated villages in (105) are henceforth Mixal's property. In that sense, uttering (writing down) "I have bought" materializes the transaction. This would testify to a greater role of the written word in executing transactions like this. Without the document, the only way of ascertaining Mixal's title to the property is to summon witnesses of the oral transaction.

These are the two aspects that appear to play a role in instances like (105). We either presume the primacy of the prior oral transaction, or the primacy of the written utterance itself. The hypothesis is that over time the role of the written utterance became larger (*Verschriftung*). In Searle's terms, the world-to-word direction of fit became more important; we shall see later on (§ 8.5.4) whether this hypothesis comes true. But the two directions of fit do not necessarily exclude each other: they "meet" in the class of assertive declarations. Thus, instances like these *can* function as mere assertives, but in the case of (105), it is more likely that we have to do with an assertive declaration.

8.3.3 *Quantitative Overview*

Now, does the above mean that all past tense examples can be analysed as assertive declarations? That would be favourable, but it is not the case, at least it does not seem to be at first sight, though certain examples may turn out to have an assertive component after all. It is appropriate now to present a table with

TABLE 14 *Explicit performatives per class*

Class	Present tense	Past tense
Assertives	0	0
Directives	2	3
Commissives	0	0
Expressives	55	0
Declarations	4	0
Assertive declarations	0	14

the instances of all explicit performatives that I have been able to detect in the birchbark corpus, in order to identify the position which is occupied by the past tense examples and the assertive declarations, as well as their mutual interrelation. As there is no real formal feature by which to select performatives, the only way of finding all instances is to go manually through the corpus and consider which verbs might qualify for a performative interpretation. Searle's categories serve as a guiding principle in this respect. Tense usage remains the crucial parameter, dividing the data into a present tense and past tense (perfect, aorist) part. A simple quantitative overview of Searle's classes and their division into present and past tense instances is given in Table 14.

Apart from the top-heavy class of expressives, which consists entirely of greeting formulae,[9] this is a remarkably meagre result in terms of explicit performatives. This inevitably means that a chronological survey will be less than reliable. Due to the sparseness of the data, no representative selection can be made for each century.

Looking at this table, the first thing that strikes one is that there are also a number of present-tense performatives, such as the following example:

(106) Vo imja Oca i Sna i Stogo Dxa. Se azъ, (raba Bžьja) Marija, otxodja sego světa, ***pišju*** rukopisa(nije pri) svojemъ životě. ***Prikazyvaju*** ostatoko svoi ------ svojemu Maksimu, zando jesmъ pusta. Pusti jego t[y](mъ) po mně pomjan[e](tь).

9 Some of these may actually be directives. For example, the phrase *čelomъ bьju* 'I beat the brow' can function as a mere greeting, but in some instances it might also be interpreted as "I ask a favour". The exact function is often hard to determine, due to the lack of context, and also not of much importance for present purposes. In any case, more extensive research will be likely to cause part of the 55 expressive instances to end up in the class of directives.

> 'In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hereby I, God's servant Marija, leaving this world, ***write*** my testament at [the end of] my life. ***I bequeath*** my inheritance to my Maksim, because I am childless. Let him remember me by it.'
>
> N692 / 1400–1410 / DND, 661

So there is variation in tense usage. The second striking characteristic seen in Table 14 is that the past tense occurs not only in the class of assertive declarations, but also in other speech act classes (see example (91) in § 8.1 for a past tense directive). Still, the vast majority of past tense examples occurs in the class of assertive declarations. We shall continue to consider this the key factor in understanding the use of the past tense. All instances of assertive declarations in the birchbark corpus are listed in Table 15.

We can now in passing only note the use of the perfect and the aorist. The significance of this variation will be discussed in § 8.5.3. First of all, the discussion about assertive declarations will be continued along examples from other (ancient) languages (§ 8.4). The connection of assertive declarations to the topic of orality and literacy will then be investigated further (§ 8.5). On the way, we shall also return to the other speech act classes, and see in what way and to what extent those examples from the birchbark corpus can be incorporated into our analysis (§§ 8.5.1–8.5.2).

8.4 Other Languages

Let us first take a look at other languages, because Old Russian does not stand alone in its variation in tense usage for performatives. Interestingly, the use of past tense forms for performative verbs seems to occur mostly in ancient languages. We shall see examples from Greek, some Semitic languages, and Old English. For each language, the reasons for the use of the past tense that have been given in the literature (if at all) will be briefly mentioned. In all cases, a diachronic shift from past to present tense can be seen. It will be attempted to establish whether any of these languages might provide us with insights that are applicable to the state of affairs in Old Russian.

8.4.1 *Semitic Languages*

In Classical (Biblical) Hebrew, explicit performatives were at first expressed by a verb in the perfect (Rogland 2001, 104). One of the consequences of the perfect being used for performatives, as Wagner (1997, 98–99) notes, is that the context has to be relied on to determine whether a given instance is really a performa-

TABLE 15 *Assertive declarations*

№	Date	Performative formula	Tense
N525 (?)	1100–1120	*Se ou Nasila **jesmь vъzjalъ** …* 'Hereby ***I have taken*** from Nasil …'	Perfect
N384 (?)	1160–1180	*To ti **esmь dale** Savě …* 'This is what ***I have given*** to Sava …'	Perfect
N211 (?)	1240–1260	*Na selo vo Jegijexo **vdalo esomo** …* 'For the village in Jeg'ja ***I have given*** …' *… i ot meže **daxo** sarati.* '… and ***gave*** to plough from the border.'	Perfect Aorist
N198	1260–1280	*Sь **vozjalo esmь** u Xrarja …* 'Hereby ***I have taken*** from Xrar' …'	Perfect
N197	1280–1300	*Se **daja** Ieve serebro Matfeju …* 'Hereby Iev ***has given*** (the) silver to Matfej.'	Aorist
N45	1320–1340	*Se **socetesja** Bobro so Semenomo.* 'Hereby Bobr ***has settled accounts*** with Semen.'	Aorist
N318 (2×)	1340–1360	*Se **kupilo** Mixalo …* 'Hereby Mixal ***has bought*** …' ***Da** 2 rublja i 3 griny daste Jakovъ.* 'He ***has given*** 2 roubles, and Jakov will give 3 grivnas.'	Perfect Aorist
N136	1360–1380	*Se **dokonьcjaxu** Myslově dětě, Trufane z bratьjeju, davati …* 'Hereby Mysl's children, Trufan and his brothers, ***have agreed*** to give …'	Aorist[10]
N366 (3×)	1360–1380	*Sь **urjaděsja** Jakovь sъ Gjurьgьto i sъ Xarětonomъ …* 'Hereby Jakov ***has settled accounts*** with Gjurgij and Xariton …' *I **vozja** Gjurьgě za vьsь to rubьlь i trě grěvony i korobьju pьšьněcě.* 'And Gjurgij ***has taken*** for all this a rouble and three grivnas and a measure of wheat.' *A Xarětonъ **vozja** dьsjatь lokotъ sukna i grěvonu.* 'And Xariton ***has taken*** ten cubits of cloth and a grivna.'	Aorist Aorist Aorist
N309	1410–1420	*A se **bilъ čelomъ** Ivašь s Simanomъ o žerebьcě.* 'And hereby Ivaš ***has beaten the brow*** with Siman about the stallion.'	Perfect

10 This is an aorist with an imperfective ending (DND: 142).

tive or whether the perfect should be interpreted as referring to a past event. In the later period, a shift can be seen towards the use of the participle for performatives (Rogland 2001, 114), until the "perfect has all but disappeared by the Mishnaic period" (ibid., 115), except in some formulaic contexts (2001, 117, fn. 71). The participle was originally a tense-neutral verb form, but later it came to function as a present tense. The change in performative tense usage should be seen against the background of the development from a mood/aspect system towards a temporal system.

In Arabic, we can also see a diachronic shift from perfect to imperfect in the case of performatives, which Procházka & Bsees (2015, 294), surprisingly, ascribe to "the influence of European languages". They explicitly exclude influence by the written medium, as papyrus letters were often read out aloud, so that they came close to a "normal", oral speech act (2011, 3). Although I am hesitant to accept the validity of these claims,[11] I have not been able to find any other explanations in the literature for the shift from perfect to imperfect in Arabic.

In Modern Standard Arabic, we can see the use of the past (perfect) tense remaining especially in traditional, heavily institutionalized settings, such as "I accept" (in a wedding ceremony) and "I divorce you" (Khalil & McCarus 1999, 10). The occurrence of the past tense in such fixed formulae may testify to its long-standing use. The use of present tense performatives is an innovation, as in most other Semitic languages. The most heavily institutionalized contexts are most resistant to this change, so that relics of earlier performative usage are preserved (in a similar way as we shall detect below for English and Russian).

In Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez), "the usual tense used in performative utterances was the perfect" (Weninger 2000, 99); imperfect (present tense) forms are interference from Greek, due to a literal translation (ibid.). Such interfer-

11 The claim about the influence of European languages is doubtful, since the shift from past to present tense in performative contexts is characteristic of most (ancient) Semitic languages; it can hardly be maintained that they were all influenced by European languages. Excluding all influence by the written medium is also unconvincing, for the new written medium can well have brought new habits with it; it can have made people feel unsure about the deictic temporal stance to be taken. This is, in fact, a line of reasoning that will be further developed later on in this chapter. I do not mean to imply that it is the only relevant factor in Arabic, for Diem (2004: 331) states that the perfect is used in performatives outside of letters, as well. Procházka & Bsees (2015) claim that the oral aspect of the letters is one of the reasons for the sparseness of performatives. Kohnen (2012: 30), when discussing Old English performatives, also maintains the view that "oral cultures typically use more performative formulae than firmly established literary cultures".

ence is unlikely to have played a role in Old Russian, especially in the birch-bark letters, the vast majority of which are not translations from Greek or any other language. In Ethiopic, we can see a diachronic shift insofar as the modern descendant languages of Ge'ez, such as Tigrinya, use the imperfect.[12] The reasons for this shift can only be speculated about at present.

Generally speaking, the Semitic languages give us some interesting examples of (diachronic) variation in the use of verbal tense in explicit performative utterances, but they are not likely to provide us with any significant insights that can be transferred to the situation in Old Russian. Greek will provide us with more food for thought.

8.4.2 (*Ancient*) *Greek*

"[Ancient] Greek has two ways to express performatives: with the (past tense) aorist and with the (imperfective) present tense" (Bary 2012, 34–35). Bary (2009; 2012) argues that the optimal form for a performative would have combined aoristic aspect with present tense (a non-existing form in Ancient Greek). Because an "aoristic present" form does not exist in Greek,[13] two "suboptimal" forms are used for performatives: either (present) tense or (aoristic) aspect is given priority. The latter case is referred to as "tragic aorist" (presumably due to its frequent occurrence in tragedy) and occurs in "a restricted class of verbs (verbs of judgment, emotion, saying, ordering, advising)" (Bary 2012, 31).

(107) {'Ορέστης} ὄμοσον (εἰ δὲ μή, κτενῶ σε) μὴ λέγειν ἐμὴν χάριν.
{Φρύξ} τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ***κατώμοσ'***, ἣν ἂν εὐορκοῖμ' ἐγώ.

'{Orestes} Swear you are not saying this to humour me, or I will kill you.
{Phrygian} I ***have sworn*** [i.e. swear] by my life, an oath I would keep!'

BARY 2009, 121–122; 2012, 31

12 Interestingly, another descendant language, viz. Amharic, uses the perfect if the addressee holds a lower status than the speaker, and the imperfect if vice versa (Weninger 2000: 100). We can reason in the following way: a person with higher status can make a decision independently of his inferior; in performative contexts, he does not require the inferior's "uptake" for the performative to be successful, and he can more easily consider the act to be finished just because of his own decision. An inferior is still in the process of carrying the action out, and is dependent on the uptake of the higher-ranking addressee for the performative to be felicitous, so that the continuous aspect of the act may be more prominent.

13 According to Bary (2012: 41), this is due to its limited usage potential, which is restricted to "coincidence", i.e. performatives.

Still, this explanation does not account for the variation between the two options: "two suboptimal forms are equally good" (Bary 2012, 50). So what is the distribution of the two forms? What determines the choice between them? I shall not attempt to delve into this question regarding Greek, but when discussing Old Russian, it will be shown that presupposing a "suboptimal" form is problematic (§ 8.4.3).

In present-day Greek, only the present tense is possible for performative verbs. A discussion of the reasons for this later shift towards full predominance of the present tense in Greek falls outside the scope of the present study, but, of course, Russian has made a development in (roughly) the same direction. It may, therefore, be tempting to try applying Bary's theory to the data on birchbark. However, this causes some considerable problems.

8.4.3 *The Optimal Performative Verb Form?*

Bary (2012) already provides some examples from various Slavic languages, while stating that the perfective present would constitute the optimal form for performatives in Slavic (i.e. from a temporal-aspectual point of view). This form is indeed encountered for performatives in Slovene and, to some extent, in Czech, and some remnants of it remain in certain Russian and Polish performative contexts (restricted to some *verba dicendi* in Russian and to *verba dicendi* in a broader sense in Polish; Dickey 2000, 179, 183):

(108) ***Zahvalim*** se. (Slovene)

'I ***thank*** [you].'
MENCEJ 1906, 48

(109) —Dovolte, pane!—Nu jo, já ***dovolím***! (Czech)

'Allow me, sir! Well, I ***allow*** [it].'
SEIDEL 1939, 17

(110) Ты дурак. Вот что тебе ***скажу***. (Russian)[14]

14 To get a more prototypical performative, it may be more appropriate to reverse the order of the sentences and put the performative verb before the asserted statement: Я тебе скажу, что ты дурак 'I'll tell you that you're stupid'. The same goes for the Polish example (111): *Powiem ci, że jesteś głupi.*

'You're stupid. ***I***[***'ll***] ***tell*** you that much!'
DICKEY 2000, 178

(111) Jesteś głupi. Tyle ci ***powiem***. (Polish)

'You're stupid. ***I***[***'ll***] ***tell*** you that much!'
KOSCHMIEDER 1930, 355

All four examples above have performatives verbs in the perfective present. Taking into account that this form is encountered in so many Slavic languages, as well as Bary's theoretical claim about its optimality for performative usage, it might be assumed that at some point the perfective present was the common form for performative verbs in Slavic. But how is the situation in attested earlier stages of the Slavic languages? When looking at Old Church Slavonic, it will be observed that the perfective as well as imperfective present are used in performative contexts (Kamphuis 2012, 358). Although the extant texts are translations, and as such liable to interference from the source language (Greek), Kamphuis (ibid.) shows that the choice of aspect is not always a slavish reproduction from Greek.

But the problem is that I have not encountered any instances of the perfective present among the performative occurrences on birchbark; this may well be taken as an argument that undermines the hypothesis. After all, why would the optimal form not have been available for performatives in Old Russian? Was it because of the future meaning which the perfective present had acquired (or was in the process of acquiring)? That might seem a plausible explanation, but we see in Byzantine Greek that future and performative meaning do not necessarily exclude each other (Kamphuis 2012); the same seems to be true of present-day Czech (cf. Dickey 2000). So is the perfective present really the optimal form for performatives?

But to move a step backwards: is Bary's theory applicable to Old Russian (and older stages of Slavic in general) at all? Are the aspectual systems of Ancient Greek and Old Russian similar to such an extent that the theory can accommodate both systems? It remains unclear what part Greek perfective aspect plays in Bary's theory, who opposes aoristic and imperfective aspect, whereas it is in fact perfective aspect that is opposed to imperfective in Slavic. In addition, in earlier stages of Slavic there was an aorist as well as a perfect tense. These considerations make the application of Bary's theory to Old Russian problematic. It may work for present-day Slavic languages, such as Slovenian, which Bary (2012) briefly touches upon, and which I have no intention of disputing, but its application to Old Russian seems to result in a dead end. Only a

superficial application is conceivable, where a way has to be found to account for the fact that perfective present is not used for performatives on birch-bark. It would require the auxiliary hypothesis that the perfective present was used at an earlier stage, but that its use in performative contexts declined and disappeared. This hypothesis, in turn, would require a theory about how the temporal-aspectual system at the unattested earlier stage of East Slavic differed from that encountered in Old Russian sources, to such an extent that perfective present no longer constituted the optimal form for performative verbs which it once would have been. All this reasoning is far too laborious to be of any avail. A more natural solution is to discard Bary's theory for the analysis of Old Russian data, as it turns out to be unhelpful there (but not for Ancient Greek, in which case the theory may be valuable). At first sight it seems a suitable theory, but upon closer inspection it is typologically too tentative to be able to transfer it to Old Russian, even though Bary applies it to present-day Slavic languages.

8.4.4 (*Old*) *English*

In order to explain tense usage in performatives in Old Russian, the next step will be to briefly examine Old English performatives, which will provide us with a more useful line of argumentation than does Bary's analysis of Ancient Greek. A first glance at Old English data reveals the use of the present tense in explicit performatives:

(112) Ic ***bidde*** eow þæt ȝe ȝymon eowra sylfra, swa eowere bec eow wissiað.

'I ***ask*** you to take care of yourselves, as your books teach you.'
Ælfric, Letter to Wulfsige / KOHNEN 2008, 30

However, Danet & Bogoch (1994, 111) note that there is inconsistency in tense usage in Anglo-Saxon wills. What do they mean by this? And are performatives concerned by this inconsistency? The example Danet & Bogoch quote (ibid., 110) concerns a will in which a declaration (*geswutelige* 'declare') occurs in the present tense:

(113) On godes ælmihtiges naman Ic Æþestan Æþeling ***geswutelige*** on þysan gewrite hu ic mine are and mine æhta ***geunnen hæbbe***.

'In the name of Almighty God I Æthelstan the Atheling ***declare*** in this document how I ***have granted*** my estates and my possessions.'
Will of Æthelstan / 1015 / WHITELOCK 1930/1986, 56–57

But then *geunnen hæbbe* 'have granted' reminds one of the assertive declarations that we have encountered in Old Russian. Danet & Bogoch call it a "mixture of a narrative report with a second act of declaring" (1994, 110). This description exactly corresponds to Searle's class of assertive declarations. Danet & Bogoch (ibid.) regard the use of the past tense as evidence for the primacy of orality: "the second half reveals that Æthelstan has already bequeathed his property, in a previous oral ceremony." To what extent the performative would have been infelicitous if the record of the grant had not been committed to writing, depends on the status of writing, and its performative power, or the "autonomy of the document", as Danet & Bogoch (ibid., 130) call it. We can take a look at another example:

(114) Ædward keening grett ælle mine wytan gehadode 7 lewede. Ænd ic ***cyþe*** eow þ[æt] ic ***hebbe bicweðen*** Portland. 7 eall þ[æt] ðerto bilyð ín to Gealden Mynstre on Wyncheastre [...] Ðyss sint þera manna naman þe ætt þysan cwidan weren. Eadgið. se hlefdie. Stigand se archeb. Harold eorl. Rengebold cancheler.

'King Edward sends his friendly greetings to all my counsellors, ecclesiastical and lay. And I ***inform*** you that I ***have bequeathed*** Portland and everything belonging to it to Old Minster at Winchester [...] These are the names of the persons who were at this bequest: Queen Edith, Archbishop Stigand, Earl Harold, Regenbald the chancellor.'

Cod. Winton. f. 7 / 1053–1066 / HARMER 1952/1989, 400

Taking the past tense as a starting point, we can assume that the bequest of Portland had taken place orally before the written record was made. The counsellors etc. are now *informed* about it, so that the titleholder could use this document as proof. However, the document itself is apparently considered insufficient proof, because at the end of the document the names of the witnesses are mentioned, who were present at the oral ceremony and the drawing up of the document, which shows that the document itself was not fully performative as yet (cf. Danet & Bogoch 1994, 113). So the main act of performance, as well as its verification, took place before the document was written. Still, as Danet & Bogoch (ibid.) note, there is a movement towards greater performativity of the documents, viz. when "witnesses were involved in the confirmation of the document, as opposed to merely witnessing the oral ceremony."[15]

15 Cf. the Old Russian expression *u pečati stojali* 'at the seal stood [+ names of witnesses]',

In sum, present tense is the default form in Old English performative expressions. Past tense assertive declarations arose due to the primacy of the preceding oral ceremony, the outcome of which was recorded in writing. In more recent times, past tense assertive declarations seem to have become ever rarer. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they no longer occur at all, as can be seen in the following purchase deed:

(115) [...] THE VENDOR ***has sold*** to the Purchaser in perpetuity a certain property called "Oxenways" with the horse, garage, outbuilding, conservatory, garden and appurtenances. [...][16]

However, the more usual way of phrasing a purchase deed in present-day English seems to be the present tense:

(116) The Seller hereby ***sells*** to the Purchaser the Property, together with all permanent improvements, fixtures and fittings, [...].[17]

So we can suppose the following path of development: the first stage is "I inform you that I have sold" (113–114), which is assertive with a developing declarational part. The second stage is the past tense "I have sold" (cf. (115)), which is an assertive declaration. Finally, the third stage is the present tense "I (hereby) sell" (cf. (116)), which is a declaration.[18] In the subsequent stages we can see the increasing performativity of documents as such, i.e. their increasing context-independence. The preceding oral ceremony loses significance.

This means that the use of the past tense in instances like (115) harks back to the times when purchasing or granting privileges was the outcome of an oral ceremony. But even today purchasing a house is still mostly an oral affair. After all, you first make all arrangements, and it is only once you have reached an agreement that the documents are finally made up. So even present-day documents with past tense assertive declarations refer back to a preceding oral transaction. In our day, it is exactly the present tense declarations that treat the purchase as though there were no oral transaction, and as though the whole

which occurs in GVNP; the witnesses witnessed the drawing up and sealing of the document, rather than just the oral transaction.

16 http://www.landregistryservices.com/samples/channel_islands/ci_purchase_deed_and_plan.pdf (Accessed 16 October 2017).

17 http://appartments-world.info/sale-to-flat/12701 (Accessed 16 October 2017).

18 The fact that in the latter two examples the third person is used, is ignored for now.

business were conducted in writing, so that the document is not only for future reference, but makes up the act of purchasing itself, rather than just ratifying it. Thus, the oral aspect is ignored in our age of excessive literacy.[19]

8.5 Discussion

It now remains to be seen how these insights, gained from (Old) English, can be transferred to Old Russian. Can it be stated more broadly that there is a general connection of performatives with the past tense? At any rate, past tense performatives do not occur in the present-day Slavic languages.[20] So if the past tense was ever used at an earlier stage, the transition must have been from past to present, never the reverse. But it is questionable whether there has been such a transition in each Slavic language, and whether the past tense was ever used at all for performatives in all these languages. The reasons for this statement will now be gone into, using the insights acquired from the Old English examples above.

Bary (2012) does not discuss the possibility of performatively used perfective aspect + past tense in the Slavic languages. Were it not for the claims made by Zaliznjak (DND, 174) about the occurrence of past tense performatives in Old Russian, the topic would never have arisen at all. So why do we have past tense? The crux of the argument lies in the fact that the reasons for the use of the past tense are of a pragmatic nature. It was mentioned already when discussing Old English (§ 8.4.4) that the past tense is perfectly suitable for assertive declarations. And indeed, it is exactly this class of performatives that is phrased in the past tense in Old Russian, too.

Now, if all this is true, an explanation is required as to why the past tense occurs not only in the class of assertive declarations, but also in other speech act classes. Not all examples considered hitherto are assertive declarations. Examples (88), (90) and (91) are directives, if we abide by Zaliznjak's interpre-

19 Literacy seems to be on the decline again, though; think of the massive explosion of digital means of communication in the past decade.

20 Except for one marginal instance in Polish, which may have more to do with verbal aspect than verbal tense, viz. *prawdę powiedziawszy* [P.PF.GER.] 'to tell you the truth', lit. 'having told the truth'. Imperfective *prawdę mówiąc* also occurs. Polish native speakers I have consulted were not able to indicate the functional difference between the two forms. The corresponding Russian expression *po pravde skazav* (lit. 'having said according to the truth') is much rarer than *prawdę powiedziawszy* in Polish.

tation. Table 14 also shows that there are more past tense examples apart from the assertive declarations.

The easiest way out would be to discard their performative character, and simply treat them as mere descriptions, but that is not necessary. Three possible reasons for the use of the past tense can be put forward: 1) The addressee's temporal perspective is implied; bearing in mind our conclusions about the epistolary past tense (chapter 7), this is a possible, albeit not very plausible, explanation. 2) There *is*, after all, an assertive component, e.g. because of the procedure of dictation; we shall encounter this aspect in § 8.5.1. 3) The use of the past tense spread from assertive declarations to other speech act classes without an assertive component; this issue is not as straightforward as it may seem and will be discussed in § 8.5.3.

In order to give a more tangible account of the reasons for the use of the past tense in the categories other than assertive declarations, we shall go ahead on the basis of examples. Now, in what cases apart from assertive declarations do we find past tense? Recall from Table 14 that we have to do with the class of directives.[21] The five potential examples that I have been able to find in the birchbark corpus are enumerated in Table 16, again in chronological order, so as to have a systematic overview.

What we see is a heterogeneous lot, in any case at first sight. In order to create some order, let us first try to see what they have in common. It then remains to be seen whether we can really be so confident as to assign these examples to Searle's speech act classes.

8.5.1 *Directives*

If we stick to Zaliznjak's (DND) interpretation, which we will do at first, a number of examples will belong to the class of directives. We already encountered one of these examples in (91) above; let us have a closer look at it and see whether this letter really contains a performative, as is assumed by Zaliznjak (DND, 175, 526):

(91) Oto Petra ko Kouzme. Jazo tobe, bratou svojemu, ***prikazale*** pro sebe tako: ourjadilo li sja so toboju ci li ne ourjadilosja, ti ty so Drociloju po somolove pravi. A jazo sja klaneju.

21 The one possible past tense example (N510) from the class of declarations has been gone into already (104); it is a special case due to the use of the pluperfect. It may also belong to the class of assertive declarations, independently from the question whether or not Petruxin's (2013) theory is accepted.

TABLE 16 *Potential past tense performatives* (*non-assertive-declarational*)

№	Date	Performative formula	Tense
N955	1140–1160	*Rěkla ti takъ Miloušja: vъdai 2 grivene večěrašenei …* 'Miluša has spoken thus: Give the 2 yesterday's grivnas.'	Perfect
St.R.11	1160–1180	*Ivanjaja molovila Fimь: ljubo kounь vosoli, pak li dorgo prodaju.* 'Ivan's wife has said to Fima: You either send the money, or I will demand that a large fine is imposed on you.'	Perfect
N510	1220–1240	*Sь stalь bьšь Kouzma na Zdylou i na Domažirovica.* 'Hereby Kuz'ma had accused Sdyla and Domažirovič.'	Pluperfect
N344	1300–1320	*Jazo tobe, bratou svojemu, prikazale pro sebe tako …* 'I have instructed you, my brother, concerning ourselves as follows …'	Perfect
N368	1360–1380	*Se blg͠vi pope Maksime …*[22] 'Hereby the priest Maksim has blessed …'	Aorist

> 'From Petr to Kuz'ma. I ***have instructed*** [i.e. hereby instruct] you, my brother, concerning ourselves as follows: whether he has made an arrangement with you or not made an arrangement, you execute [it] with Dročila according to the agreement. And I bow down.'
>
> N344 / 1300–1320 / DND, 526

Zaliznjak views *prikazale*-PERF.M.SG 'ordered' as a performative, to be interpreted as "приказываю этим своим письмом" 'instruct by this letter of mine' (DND, 175), i.e. it is to be rendered by a present tense form in present-day Russian. This is also what Zaliznjak does in his translation (DND, 526). Interestingly, when he discusses the letter itself in more detail, he translates *prikazale* with a past tense form: "приказал именно самим этим письмом" 'have instructed by this letter itself'. Now, first of all, is this performative interpretation justified? And if so, what about the past tense? After all, a past tense rendering with the addition "by this letter itself" would seem awkward.

22 N368 may contain a fixed formula, but again, there is a lack of context; only a fragment of the document has come down to us. It may well be that *blagosloviti* 'to bless' has to be interpreted here in the sense of "to grant, bequeath" (this meaning of the verb is allowed in SRJa XI–XVII (1: 218)), in which case this example should be analysed as an assertive declaration, functioning in the context of the priest's last will.

To start with, a by now well-known caveat has to be mentioned, viz. the data problem. We simply do not know whether Petr had already given this or a similar instruction to his brother before he wrote this letter. If he had, the letter is a repetition of the earlier order, or a reminder, because Kuz'ma may not have complied with it. In that case, *prikazale* would be a "normal" past tense in its standard use. However, habits of efficient communication on birchbark would make this suggestion less plausible. After all, communication on birchbark was generally characterized by a sparseness of information, often even by the absolute minimum that was thought to suffice for communication. In that sense, a repetition of an earlier command would be unusual, so that a non-standard, performative use of the past tense would indeed appear to be a reasonable option. But nevertheless, the circumstances surrounding the letter could still make a repetition or reminder possible or necessary, so that this is certainly not the right example from which to draw hard and fast conclusions.

Still, it should be noted that the vast majority of occurrences of the same verb in the GVNP documents is phrased in the present tense; one example is the following:

(117) Vo imja otca i syna i svjatago duxa. Se jazъ rabъ božii Ostafei spisaxъ rukopisanьe pri svoemъ životě. A ***prikazyvaju*** životъ svoi gospože svoei materi Ontonьi i synovi svoemu Fedoru, otcynu svoju i dědinu, zemlju i vodu, po otca svoego rukopisanьju i po voloděnьju. [...]

'In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hereby I, God's servant Ostafii, have written my testament at [the end of] my life. And ***I bequeath*** my living to madam my mother Ontonija and to my son Fedor, my father's and grandfather's inheritance, land and water, according to my father's testament and possession. [...]'

GVNP 110 / 1393 / VALK 1949, 166

The same goes for two other examples on birchbark (N519/520 and N692, which are not directives, however, but, like all examples from GVNP, declarations in a testament, where the verb *prikazati* should be translated as 'to bequeath').[23] N692 has already been quoted as example (106) above (§ 8.3.3).

23 This discrepancy in class confirms at least two different meanings of the word *prikaz(yv)ati*, as is supported by Sreznevskij (1893–1912/2: 1408–1410) and SRJa XI–XVII (19: 170, 173), viz. "to order/inform" and "to entrust/bequeath".

There is, then, not much reason to assume a non-standard use of the past tense in examples like (91). However improbable it may be, we may need to stick to the scenario that the instruction had already been made before the letter was written.

It is easy to discard the performative interpretation, but still, a few things have to be considered. Is it possible that this speech act contains an assertive (word-to-world) component? Such an interpretation may mean two things: 1) it is a reminder; 2) it refers to a previous oral instruction given to the scribe, who transfers it to his own temporal perspective, but retains the author's personal deixis.

This example shows us that a pragmaphilological account, however elegantly formulated, should not be taken to its extreme. One example is not enough for a whole theory to be built on. If it is valid at all, it remains to be consolidated by future findings. For the time being, though, it should be treated with caution.

The next example, which we already stumbled upon above, has also been considered a directive:

(90) Ivanjaja ***molovila*** Fimь: ljubo kounь vosoli, pak li dorgo prodaju.

> 'Ivan's wife ***has said*** to Fima: You either send the money, or I will demand that a large fine is imposed on you.'
>
> St.R.11 / 1160–1180 / DND, 446

Gippius (2004, 213) interprets *molovila* as "послала (настоящую) грамоту, написав" 'sent (the present) letter, having written'. This is in line with Zaliznjak's interpretation as "говорит этим своим письмом" 'says by means of this letter' (DND, 175). It is unlikely that Ivan's wife would have said this to Fima before, in which case this letter would be a mere reminder. The only way that the letter gets communicative relevance is to assume a performative interpretation of the perfect tense.

Interestingly, Gippius (2004, 208) also hints at an underlying connection with the procedure of dictation. Thus, Ivan's wife may have instructed a scribe to write this message down.[24] In that case, from the scribe's perspective, Ivan's

24 Additional evidence for this procedure in this particular instance may be provided by the unusual self-designation *Ivanjaja* 'Ivan's [wife]'. If this letter were an autograph by Ivan's wife herself, she would have used her own proper name, as do so many other women on birchbark. However, if she instructed a scribe orally to write down a message of this purport, the scribe may have designated her from this slightly unusual perspective.

wife has already said this, though not directly to Fima, but by dictating it to the scribe.[25] As far as Ivan's wife is concerned, however, the action is completed. It is this connection with dictation that will turn out to be important for our discussion.[26]

The same way of reasoning can be applied to another example (cf. Collins 2011):

(118) [...] ***Rěkla*** ti takъ Miloušja: vъdai 2 grivene vecěrašenei.

'[...] Miluša ***has spoken*** thus: Give yesterday's 2 grivnas.'
N955 / 1140–1160 / NGB XII, 55

Miluša gave this message orally; we do not know to what extent she dictated it verbatim, but in any case, the scribe wrote it down after Miluša had said it.

In sum, the early examples from Table 16 (12th century, N955 and St.R.11) can be connected to the procedure of dictation, which would make them at least partly assertive, in the sense that the past tense form makes reference to a preceding oral speech act, of which the scribe makes a written fixation. Does this mean that we should invent another mixed class, viz. "assertive directives", in the same vein as assertive declarations? That is hardly worth the theoretical load for the sake of just a few marginal examples. Lumping them together with the assertive declarations is also problematic, as it would stretch the definition of declarations too much. For the time being it seems sensible to just keep viewing them as directives (taking their function into account), though a possible assertive component should explicitly be allowed (taking the direction of fit into account). Maybe the conclusion should be drawn that Searle's classes are not exhaustive. In any case, positing the presence of an

25 On a more speculative note, might it be possible that Fima is not the addressee of the message, but the messenger (letter-bearer)? In that case, Ivan's wife instructed Fima to deliver this message to the addressee, whose name is not mentioned, because it follows from the situation anyway.

26 As an aside, it becomes clear from this example that performative verbs in themselves cannot give a decisive answer about the class of illocutionary acts to which the utterance belongs; we need to look at the function of the utterance as a whole. If we look at the verb *molviti* 'to say', we might expect an assertive. The real function of this illocutionary act is, however, a directive. Lists of performative verbs in a specific language are often given, e.g. by Searle (1989), subdivided into his five classes of illocutionary acts. "To say" is does not fit into such a list, because of its more general meaning.

assertive component seems to be the best way of explaining the use of the past tense. A connection with the procedure of dictation, obviously, connects these examples to the topic of orality and literacy, too.

8.5.2 *Expressives*

One past tense example from our corpus (N309) may at first sight be recognized as an expressive. Expressives are mainly concerned with the feelings and attitudes of the interlocutors, including fixed social patterns. The only, and abundantly available, examples on birchbark are greetings (phrased in the present tense):[27]

(119) Poklonъ ot Smenka ot Korělina. Prišle, gne, t kobě na selo na Pytarevo. Cimъ jego žaluješь i ty, ospdne, prikaži vsjakoje slovo. A jazъ tobě, svojemu gnu, ***colomъ běju***.

'Greetings from Smenko the Karelian. [He] has come to you, lord, to Pytar's village. If you will grant him anything, then you, lord, give all the instructions. And I ***beat*** [***my***] ***brow*** to you, my lord.'

N243 / 1420–1430 / DND, 674

The explicit performative *colomъ běju* 'I beat [my] brow' is a typical letter ending for the later period of birchbark literacy.

Pardee & Whiting (1987, 28–29) discuss the question whether the Ugaritic and Akkadian prostration formula "I hereby fall" (which occurs in the perfect tense) should be seen as performative or as instances of the epistolary past tense. The discussion revolves around the question: did the author really fall when writing or dictating the letter? If so, it is an epistolary past tense. But that is rather unlikely, so that it is more probable to be a polite "fiction": by writing the formula down, the greeting takes place, without a prior or simultaneous physical bow made by the author. The same holds, of course, for the instances of 'brow-beating' in birchbark letters, so that they should be seen as performatives. Table 14 shows that they are typically phrased in the present tense. However, there is one instance of beating the brow in the past tense on birchbark:

27 For present purposes, we can, obviously, leave the nominal greeting formulae aside, although they can also be regarded as implicit expressives (*poklonъ, čelobitьje*, etc.).

(120) A se ***bilъ čelomъ*** Ivašь s Simanomъ o žerebьcě.

'And hereby Ivaš ***has beaten the brow*** with Siman about the stallion.'
N309 / 1410–1420 / DND, 685

It should be noted that this is the complete text of a short document. Is this a past tense expressive, then? If we start considering the possible function of this little document, is it likely to be just a greeting? Zaliznjak supposes that it might have served as "ярлычок при челобитной, указывающий на ее основное содержание" 'a label attached to a petition, referring to its general content' (DND, 685). In another vein, it may rather have had a symbolical function in the sense of Bulanin (1997), who regards the symbolical function of the birchbark letters as primary and sees any functional content as secondary (cf. § 2.5 and § 4.5.4). In that case, it should be concluded that the real petition took place orally, whereas this document serves as a ratification of that oral petition, without making it explicit. This interpretation is in line with one of the possible meanings ("to petition") of the expression *biti čelomъ* that are distinguished in the dictionaries.[28] It also allows us to regard the example as an assertive declaration, rather than a directive: the petition is declared to have taken place.

8.5.3 *Spreading of the Past Tense*

So the use of the past tense in performative contexts arose due to pragmatic reasons: it points either to the primacy of a preceding oral transaction, or, more generally, to a broader spectrum of oral habits. The consensus is that oral habits diminished over time and were replaced by literate ones. Consequently, it is to be expected that, with the decrease of oral habits, the use of the past tense would also disappear from performative contexts. But why is it, then, that in spite of the increasing role that was played by documents, the past tense formulation remained until the end of the birchbark era, and further until well into the seventeenth century, and in some contexts, such as purchase acts, even up to the present time? The answer is simple: it became a fixed

28 SRJa XI–XVII (1: 188) distinguishes "а) кланяться, приветствовать; б) жаловаться; в) благодарить" 'a) to bow down, to greet; b) to petition; c) to thank'. Sreznevskij (1893–1912/3: 1488–1489) is less specific: "просить, жаловаться" 'to ask, to grant'. *Biti čelomъ* 'to beat the brow' in the sense of 'to greet' usually combines with a dative form. In this letter (N309) it combines with the preposition *s* 'with' + instrumental case. This construction is a hapax on birchbark. It probably testifies to a different meaning and usage compared to the greetings, which belong to the expressive class.

TABLE 17 *Distribution of perfect and aorist forms in assertive declarations*

№	Date	Perfect	Aorist
N525	1100–1120	✓	
N384	1160–1180	✓	
N211 (2×)	1240–1260	✓	✓
N198	1260–1280	✓	
N197	1280–1300		✓
N45	1320–1340		✓
N318 (2×)	1340–1360	✓	✓
N136	1360–1380		✓
N366 (3×)	1360–1380		✓
N309	1410–1420	✓	

formula, thereby testifying to a process of *Verschriftlichung*. This explanation is reinforced by the fact that in the later birchbark period, the aorist was increasingly employed for assertive declarations (see below), though it was no longer in use in the spoken language. This shows that people were aware of the stylistic implications and tried to create an elevated, "high style" register for executing written performative acts. The spread of the past tense from assertive declarations to the other classes of performatives may have occurred for exactly the same reason.

We have now discussed the second of the three possible reasons for the occurrence of the past tense in categories other than assertive declarations (viz. the presence of a "hidden" assertive component due to dictation). The third option was that the past tense spread from assertive declarations into the other speech act classes. In Table 15, an overview has already been given of all examples that can be analysed as assertive declarations. Some of the earliest examples are doubtful, due to the "bad data problem". They may just as well be simple implicit assertives. It may have been noted from Table 15 already that the aorist seems to be taking over towards the end of the period. This development of an increasing use of the aorist, ousting the perfect, in assertive declarations is worth some more attention. The process can be traced chronologically in Table 17.

The increasing use of the aorist cannot have stemmed from its original semantic properties. It was seen at that stage as a stylistically higher equivalent of the perfect tense (DND, 174), having fallen out of use in the living language

long before. This serves as an indication that past tense assertive declarations had rather become fixed formulae. Still, the aorist never entirely supplanted the perfect in assertive declarations. In the parchment documents of the 15th century, the perfect remains to be used, too.

The use of the aorist (or past tense in general, for that matter) cannot stem from performative usage in Old Church Slavonic either. Petruxin (2004, 75) says that "его употребление было обусловлено ориентацией на образцовые книжные тексты" 'its use was determined by an orientation towards exemplary bookish texts'. This may go for the use of the aorist as such, which had disappeared from the spoken language already in the 11th century (ibid.), but not for its occurrence in exactly this (performative) context. The aorist was not chosen because Old Church Slavonic also had aorist performatives. Old Church Slavonic uses present tense for performatives, as was briefly mentioned above already (§ 8.4.3). The only realistic assessment is that the aorist in Old Russian was an additional stylistic element, whose usage in performative contexts stemmed from an experimental vernacular use of writing.

The aorist must have disappeared from the spoken language earlier than e.g. Bjørnflaten (2013) is willing to acknowledge. It persisted, among other things, in performative-like contexts in writing. Thus, a qualitative study into the pragmatic use of a grammatical construction is useful in that it can add insights to a merely quantitative chronological survey. The use of the aorist on birchbark is very different from its use in e.g. chronicles, due to the profoundly different nature of both text types. For instance, Matthews (1995, 303) states that "the Aorist is typically in the company of other Aorists." This may be true for narrative texts, but it does not apply to documents on birchbark. Thus, text type and use are important variables. It is not simply a question of whether the aorist pertains to the spoken or written medium. It can be encountered in some written genres, but hardly or not at all in others. In part, this can be attributed to a difference in nature between texts (e.g. whether they are narrative or not, or in terms of the different genres to which they belong), but it also depends on whether the language of immediacy or distance is used. Due to its increasing formality, which is related to its decreasing use, the aorist came to be associated with the language of distance.

The next question in the discussion runs as follows: might it be possible that the past tense assertive declarations became fixed formulae to such an extent that the past tense was no longer taken at face value, so that the use of the past tense could be generalized to other speech act classes? In other words, the preceding (oral) element that gave rise to the use of the past tense was no longer prominent enough to remind people of this preceding component, and the past tense became associated with the element of performing, rather

than ratifying. In more theoretical terms: assertive declarations were reanalyzed as "pure" declarations, without a hint at a preceding (oral) act, and thus without an assertive component. In even more abstract terms, implicit performatives were reanalyzed as explicit performatives (more about this in § 8.5.5 below).

8.5.4 *Diachronic Considerations*

Unfortunately, there is no clear and unequivocal path of development in performative tense usage that can be traced chronologically. It would have been very nice to be able to provide a graph showing the decline of the use of the past tense and the reappearance of the present tense. But throughout the period, both appear side by side. This means that the whole period of birchbark and parchment literacy must have been one of transition. In other words, people kept experimenting with literacy. The results of these experiments were then fossilized and became more or less conventionalized.

The hypothesis is as follows. At first, the past tense was used to refer to the preceding oral transaction, but later on the past tense forms may have been reinterpreted as declarations, where their past tense value was no longer taken at face value. But this reminds one of Bary's theory that either the tense or aspect value of a form was ignored in favour of the other (Bary 2009; 2012; cf. § 8.4.2 above). The development would have been that at first past tense was used for its past time reference, but over time the role of the documents (as opposed to the role of a preceding oral ceremony) grew larger and the past tense forms were reinterpreted as explicit performatives, while being retained and even reinforced as fixed formulae. It can be that both attitudes co-existed for centuries, and to different degrees for different actions. Some of them have never lost their past tense orientation up till now (such as purchase deeds).

8.5.5 *The Status of the Verb: Performative or Not?*

Some more needs to be said about the status of the verbs in assertive declarations, i.e. whether they are performative verbs or not. But first of all we need to describe the difference in status between performative and non-performative verbs in the past tense. It may be illuminating to give an overview once more of the way in which I envisage the matter of tense usage in performatives on birchbark.

A past tense phrase is most likely to be a plain assertive. It has no institutional value, it is just a plain statement that some action took place in the past. It is obvious that the past tense is appropriate to be used in such cases. An assertive declaration looks basically the same, with the significant difference

that it not only makes an assertion about a past action, but it also ratifies it within the confines of an institution. This institution may be a legal or administrative one, but the practice of writing is also an institution.

Declarations, finally, have nothing to do with an action in the past. They do not assert or ratify an action which took place in the past, but they effect an action in the present, by uttering the declaration. Though some languages (such as Ancient Hebrew and other Semitic languages) can use past tense forms here, most languages, including Old Russian, use present tense forms for performative verbs in declarations. Verb forms in the past tense are interference from assertive declarations. This class, which is in itself mixed, thus testifies of a mixed attitude towards the role of writing. If reference is made to a prior action, which is ratified by the document, this means that writing is not the prime part of performing the action. The main part has already been established orally. But apparently, the oral agreement is no longer enough: the document does have some function in the whole procedure, viz. that of ratifying the action. As such, writing is not insignificant, and we cannot state that people had a totally oral mindset. They were aware of the advantages of a written ratification. Still, the oral agreement was kept in mind.

Again, what about past tense usage in performatives that belong to classes other than that of assertive declarations? In order to flesh this matter out theoretically, let us try to illustrate it by an English example. Take a look at the following four sentences:

(121) a. I have bought the estate.
b. I hereby declare that I have bought the estate.
c. *I hereby have bought the estate.
d. I hereby buy the estate.

Now, we do not find all four hypothetical cases attested in Old Russian, either on birchbark or on parchment. The aim of putting them forward is of a theoretical kind, viz. to see in which of these four cases we have an explicit performative. To put it differently, the issue at stake is in which of these cases the form of "to buy" can be called a performative verb.

(121a) can be a pure assertive about a previous act, i.e. there does not have to be a performative power here. In that case, it has the word-to-world direction of fit: it just describes a state of affairs in the world. But it can also be an assertive declaration, a truncated version of (121b), depending on the status of writing. Still, the verb can never be called an explicit performative.

(121b) is an explicit declaration about a past act, which makes it an assertive declaration. It has a twofold direction of fit, i.e. the word-to-world as well as

the double direction of fit. What if we consider (a) a truncated version of (b) in which the performative verb is left out? It then still describes a situation in the world, but at the same time it strengthens and ratifies this situation. This depends on the function of the document in which the speech act occurs. Type (b) is, by the way, the kind of expression which we find quite frequently in Old English documents. The performative verb in the main clause has present tense, whereas the verb in the subordinate clause has past tense; cf. the Old English examples (113) and (114).

The speech act in (121c) sounds odd in English, of course, but this is a construction that is encountered quite commonly in GVNP (though phrased in the third person), for example the following:

(122) Se kupilъ Rodivonъ Timofěevicь u svoego brata u Sidora loskutъ zemli na Jurmoli oramoi, Uskuju věrětěju. [...]

'Hereby Rodivon Timofeevič has bought from his brother Sidor a piece of land on the Jurmola pasture, a narrow mound (or: [the village] Uskaja Vereteja). [...]'

GVNP 229 / 2nd half of the 15th c. / VALK 1949, 250

Other examples are GVNP 106, 116, 134, 233, 247, and at least 50 more. They show a transitional form; the word-to-world direction of fit is losing ground. The assertive part is becoming less prominent. Functionally, it is becoming more and more like a declaration. If that is so, the verb is increasingly likely to be analysed as a performative verb, even though it is still phrased in the past tense, as a relic from the time when the assertive part was still more important. The role that *hereby* plays in this respect (the particle *se* in Old Russian) remains to be determined.

In (121d) we have a pure declaration with a double direction of fit. Obviously, the verb is explicitly performative here.

So not all of the above constructions are explicit performatives. If we analyse (121a) as an assertive declaration, the past tense verb form is not a performative verb. In that case, we have to do with an implicit performative. This must mean that past tense usage spread from implicit to explicit performatives, from non-performative verbs to performative verbs. Searle does not contemplate the possibility of a performative verb in the case of assertive declarations. The past tense verb in an assertive declaration is not performative and just stems from normal past tense usage. We can assume that with the growth of the institutional function of these formulae, they came to be reanalysed as performative verbs, so that the past tense started to be associated with performatives. This

can have given way to the use of the past tense in performative verbs that never had an assertive component.

But as has been mentioned already (§ 8.5.1), most of these examples must have started out with an assertive component anyway, e.g. because of the procedure of dictation. Consequently, the assertive component, referring to a previous oral action, is to be seen as the primary factor in the use of the past tense.

Due to the absence of a formal characteristic, we cannot draw a red line as to if and when these verbs became explicitly performative (i.e. pure declarations, without assertive interference). At that point, their past tense value was only a relic of an earlier pattern of use, a petrified remnant from times when orality was still more prominent.

Whether or not to regard the assertive declarations as explicit performatives depends totally on the degree to which they were perceived as performing the act independently from a preceding oral transaction. If that is the case, they are explicit declarations, and cease to belong to the mixed class of assertive declarations. But this is improbable due to the nature of most of the actions, even up to the present day (cf. the modern purchase deeds).

So, ultimately, for the instances that were identified above as assertive declarations, the answer to the question whether they contain a performative verb or not depends on their functional status, i.e. whether or not they rely on a preceding oral transaction. This is a factor that does not immediately emerge from the data, but rather from theoretical reasoning.

8.5.6 *Some Additional Considerations*

To briefly return to our first option for the occurrence of past tense examples in other speech act classes: what can be said about the possibility that decoding time was taken in past tense performatives, just like in certain instances of the epistolary past tense? Even then, the use of the past tense can be taken as a strategy to adapt one's communicative habits to the new realities of the written medium. In our case study about the epistolary past tense, we had to conclude that there are cases in which decoding time is taken. In the same way, it is possible that, at least in a number of performative instances, the prospective reader's perspective was the reason for the use of the past tense. In such a case, the speech act would have been an assertive declaration for the reader. In my theory, it is an assertive declaration for the author as well as the reader. But an assertive declaration for the reader would also have been a reflection of oral habits, because even then the document itself would not be seen as "performative": the assertive part would refer to the time when the document was made up (written, witnessed and sealed), as having some priority (more performative potential) over the mere words in the document itself.

When stating that the use of the past tense stems from a transition towards literacy, we take for granted that the normal form for performatives in spoken language would have been the present tense. Do we have evidence for this? Of course, we have no spoken data. The birchbark letters are probably the closest we can get to spoken language. But still, their language is "contaminated" by the transition towards literacy. In that sense, the birchbark letters are not purely oral.

Evidence may be found in documents that explicitly describe an oral procedure. For Ancient Hebrew, for example, there is ample such evidence that the past tense was also used for performatives in spoken discourse, and as such was independent from orality and literacy. But for Old Russian, there are indeed indications that present tense would have been the norm in spoken language. Take, for example, the phrase: *jemlju tja* 'I accuse you' (Gippius 1996, 51). This is a present tense performative, and part of a sentence that had to be pronounced in a legal procedure. It shows that the present tense could certainly be used in oral discourse. Further research would be needed to consolidate this preliminary result.

As an aside, all present tense performatives on birchbark turn out to be *verba dicendi*. Without going into another problem now, a question can be raised as to the status of "to write", viz. whether it is a performative or an instance of the epistolary past tense. This is an issue that calls for further research.

The parchment documents contain some more elements which cause problems, even at first sight. This study first and foremost concerns the birchbark corpus, but we cannot entirely ignore data from other sources. A first glance at the GVNP parchment documents may seem to undermine the proposed theory. There is variation in GVNP in tense usage in performatives (e.g. "to give") all throughout the period. This also indicates that the status of the written document was unstable; people were unsure as to whether it functioned as a declaration in its own right, or rather as an addendum to a preceding oral ceremony. Nevertheless, the fact that it was written down shows that there was an awareness of the added value written documents had for the ratification of a transaction, and the possibility it created for future reference.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

We can now return to the question formulated above: Should the reason for the use of the past tense in the aforementioned instances be sought in the area of orality and literacy? If we take into account the above discussion, seeing the past tense examples as assertive declarations positions them on the road from

orality towards literacy. So in the end, the assertive declarations should be seen as an intermediate category: not only as a mix between two of Searle's theoretical classes, but also as a step halfway on the road from orality to literacy, and also as a point halfway between implicit and explicit performatives. Orality, because of the reference to a preceding oral transaction; literacy, because of the ratifying function which the document fulfills. They are neither implicit nor explicit performatives, because of the unstable (performative or non-performative) status of the verb (cf. § 8.5.5). This, in short, is the paradoxical position of the assertive declarations.

Two factors play a role in the use of the past tense: 1) the author refers to a previous oral act which is ratified by the document; 2) the author considers the act finished by writing the document, independently from the addressee's "uptake". These two aspects are reminiscent of the phenomenon of "epistolary past tense". The three factors are, again: (a) the decision has been made, (b) the arrangements have been prepared and carried out, and (c) the document finally ratifies them (see e.g. N45 in Table 15).

So the use of the past tense in this context is a feature that can be traced back to oral habits, but these became fixed and became a literate feature. In other words, they are oral characteristics that exist only in the written medium. Past tense performatives arose due to the rise of the written medium, but the reason why they arose is of an oral nature. This again underlines the validity of Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) distinction between medium and conception. We shall return to this point in chapter 9.

This case study also illustrates how a linguistic phenomenon can be traced back to social practice. Tense usage can be related to the amount of trust placed in writing and the role reserved for written documents. For those who used past tense assertive declarations, the oral ceremony was primary. However, writing was acknowledged to play a role in the ratification of the oral transaction. This is a first step towards the acknowledgement of the full performative potential of the written medium. Variation arose due to the unstable status of the written word.

A second step on the road towards the language of distance is that the past tense phrases became fixed formulae: this is a case of conventionalization, which is part of a movement towards literacy (*Verschriftlichung*).

Finally, let us return to where we began this chapter, viz. Zaliznjak's statement about the performative or near-performative function of the perfect tense (DND, 175; cited in § 8.1). We can only assume his examples (2–5) to be explicit performatives if the role of writing was significant and the oral component had phased out. In the birchbark period we are still in a period of transition, however, so that these examples are, strictly speaking, not perfor-

matives, nor “near-performatives”, but “developing” performatives struggling towards full performativity; they are in the process of throwing off the “shackles” of orality.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

In chapter 4, a line of investigation was proposed in which a pragmaphilological approach to the birchbark letters is employed in order to elicit manifestations of orality from the birchbark corpus. In chapters 5–8, a set of linguistic parameters was investigated in order to shed light on the position of the birchbark letters on the orality-literacy interface. It is time now to formulate our conclusions and to connect the various strands of argument with which the case studies have supplied us. The insights yielded by the case studies will be generalized, so that we can see in what way the case studies are interconnected, by identifying overarching features that recur throughout the case studies (§ 9.2). These features show that the birchbark letters functioned in a transitional period of *Verschriftlichung*, i.e. they show a dynamic stage of development where the language of immediacy and the language of distance are in close interaction (§ 9.3). A brief final appraisal is given in § 9.4.

It was mentioned in chapter 3 that Gippius's (2004) communicative heterogeneity in birchbark letters is a manifestation of orality in one specific text type. We took this as our starting point and then stressed that if this is so, it is to be expected that there are other linguistic manifestations to be found in the whole of the corpus, too. So our main question was as follows:

Keeping in mind that (hidden) communicative heterogeneity has been identified as one manifestation of an oral component in the communicative process, it is to be expected that there are more such manifestations in the birchbark texts. In what ways does this oral component manifest itself in linguistic features, and how can these features be accounted for in terms of the transition from orality to literacy?

The application of a pragmaphilological approach to four case studies has allowed us to identify linguistic parameters that can be connected to orality; more precisely, the presence and use of these linguistic elements can be *explained* from the perspective of orality. Thus, the absence of imperative subjects in communicatively heterogeneous letters has been explained by the letters' context-dependence, mainly because of the messenger's mediating role. The use of (free) direct speech has also been explained in terms of a high degree of context-dependence. Both the epistolary past tense and assertive declarations have been explained by making the past tense refer to a preceding act or

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oral ceremony, which is also a form of context-dependence. In all these cases, by *positing* an oral component, we have been able to *interpret* the birchbark letters more accurately *in the light of* this oral component.

9.2 General Lines Connecting the Case Studies

The abovementioned results from the individual case studies will now have to be connected to each other, in view of providing us with some new insights about the birchbark corpus as a whole in terms of orality and literacy.

Firstly, it has to be borne in mind that each individual case study can provide only part of the picture. For example, the case study about imperative subjects showed us several communicatively heterogeneous letters for which Clark's (1996, 8) "basic (face-to-face) setting" has to be assumed, because they cannot be properly understood and explained otherwise. This alone does not necessarily tell us anything about the birchbark corpus in general. It only tells us something about the specific type of documents that was under consideration, viz. instructions to more than one person. The insights gained from them can be generalized only while taking into account the other case studies as well.

Secondly, we cannot position the entire birchbark corpus at a point on the scale between immediacy and distance; the corpus is too heterogeneous for that. Only individual documents, and possibly genres, can occupy a position on that scale. What remains to be done, then, is to identify common characteristics that connect the results of all case studies together.

Three general lines will be followed in the following three subsections: 1) dividing the features of orality in the birchbark corpus into three **types**; 2) discussing **shifts of perspective** as a *leitmotiv* emerging from all case studies; 3) identifying the degree of **context-dependence** of the birchbark letters.

9.2.1 *Types of Orality*

In § 4.5.3, we distinguished three types of orality, viz. **speech-based**, **speech-like** and **speech-purposed**; the terms were borrowed from Culpeper & Kytö (2010), whereas the definitions were slightly modified to fit the purposes of the present study. Now that we have a general overview of the results from the case studies and the relationship between them, we can categorise our findings in terms of these three types of orality. In this way, we can add to the general observation made by Gippius (2004) that the birchbark letters contain an "oral factor". How can this oral factor be further specified on the basis of our findings?

1) Speech-based orality is first of all reflected by the procedure of dictation: the letters are a reflection of a previous spoken utterance. Gippius (2004) already noted this phenomenon, and we have also adduced several examples where traces of dictation could be seen; see e.g. N344, N497, N955, and St.R.11, quoted here once again:

(123) Ivanjaja molovila Fimь: Ljubo kounь vosoli, pak li dorgo prodaju.

'Ivan's wife has said to Fima: You either send the money, or I will demand that a large fine is imposed on you.'

St.R.11 / 1160–1180 / DND, 446

In addition, past tense assertive declarations are the result of a preceding oral act, which makes these utterances speech-based to a certain extent, though in a different way than dictated letters; see, e.g., N318:

(124) Se kupilo Mixalo u knzja velikogo Boroce u Vasilija Odrejana Kuzneca i Tokovu i Ostrovnu i Rotkovici Kodracja i Vedrovo. Da 2 rublja, i 3 griny daste Jakovъ. Atno se zaměšete Mixaly bratu jeg daste serebro dvoje.

'Hereby Mixal has bought from Vasilij, the great prince's tax collector, Odrejan the blacksmith and [the villages] Tokova, Ostrovna, Rokoviči Kodrača and Vedrovo. [Mixal] has given 2 roubles, and Jakov will give 3 grivnas. If any damage will occur, [the one who is guilty] shall pay the double amount to Mixal and his brother.'

N318 / 1340–1360 / DND, 611

2) Speech-purposed orality can be seen in communicatively heterogeneous letters and instructive direct speech. These letters are meant to be read out aloud or elaborated on orally, so that they function in a face-to-face setting. The presence of a messenger is indispensable for this type of orality to be employed successfully, as was demonstrated by N954:

(125) Gramota ot Žiročьka i ot Těšьka kъ V[ъ]dъvinou. Mlvi Šilьcevi: "Cemou pošibaeši svinьě cjužě? A p[ъ]nesla Nъ[z]drьka. A esi posoromilъ konьcь vъxъ Ljudinь. So onogo polou gramata. Pro kъni že ta bys(tь) ože si tako sъtvorilъ."

'A letter from Žiročko and from Těško to Vdovin. Say to Šil'ce: "Why are you damaging other people's pigs? Nozdr'ka has made [this] known.

And you have disgraced the entire Ljudin End. [There has been] a letter from the other side [of the river]. It was about horses, that you have done the same with them".'

N954 / 1100–1120 / NGB XII, 50

3) **Speech-like** orality is more basic, more pervasive, harder to detect; it is rather a consequence of the presence of the other two types of orality. If a text is speech-based or speech-purposed, this will most likely result in speech-like characteristics. These can be seen in all case studies. The letters are phrased in such a way that they either cannot be understood independently of an oral component (which testifies to their context-dependence), or certain linguistic elements that are contained in them can be explained only with reference to the letter's speech-based or speech-purposed nature, and therefore are a manifestation of the language of immediacy.

9.2.2 *Shifts of Perspective*

Shifts of perspective are another thread running through the case studies. In a more theoretical vein, they can be connected to deixis. We have encountered different kinds of shifts.

1) First of all, and most conspicuously, there are referential shifts in communicatively heterogeneous texts, viz. between parts of texts with different addressees. These shifts can be evaluated in the light of person deixis: for instance, the second-person singular personal pronoun *ty* can refer to different participants at different sides of a referential boundary. What is more, *ty* as an explicit imperative subject can *signal* such a boundary:

(126) Ot Maksima ko Desjascjanamo. Datь Melejanu 8 deže, naklado i veši. A ty, starosto, sberi.

'From Maksim to the inhabitants of Desjatskoe. [You are to] give Mel'jan 8 *dežas*—interest and grain. And you, elder-VOC, collect [them].'

N253 / 1360–1380 / DND, 583

2) Secondly, we have seen referential boundaries between reported speech and the authorial frame as a signal of direct reported speech. In the same way as with communicatively heterogeneous texts, personal pronouns of all kinds can refer to different participants at different sides of the boundary, so this type is also concerned with person deixis:

(127) [...] Ot Esifa k Ъnfima. Čtъ prišle ot Markъ k tobě ljudii Olьksa, ili kъ žene mъjei, otvěcai jemu takъ: "Kakъ esi dokončalъ, Marke-VOC, sъ mnъju, mně vyjexati Petrъvo dne k tobě i rosmъtriti sьla svojegъ; tъbě rъže svъja snjati, a mně naklady tvoje dati. A istina dana." [...]

'From Jesif to Onfim. If Oleksa will send people from Mark to you or to my wife, answer him as follows: "As you, Mark, have arranged with me, I have to come out to you on St. Peter's day and inspect my village; you have to harvest your rye, and I have to give your interest. And the debt has been given." [...]'

N142 / 1300–1320 / DND, 536

3) In the case studies about the epistolary past tense and assertive declarations we are confronted with a different kind of shift, viz. temporal. This type of shift is connected to temporal deixis, as the author positions himself and the act of writing temporally with respect to either decoding time (i.e. a real temporal shift towards the moment when the addressee will read the letter) or the execution of the sending procedure itself or a previous act, the completion of which is ratified by the document:

(128) Ognu Jelizaru mnogo čelomъ biju. Poslalъ jemь, ogne, k tobě s Larionь(cem)[ъ 100] kleščevъ. Pošli, ospodine, [...]

'To lord Jelizar I bow deeply. I have sent, lord, to you with Larionec 100 breams. Send, lord, [...]'

N964 / end of 14th century / NGB XII, 75

The usual explanation of the epistolary past tense in terms of a switch to the addressee's temporal perspective (i.e. the author tries to overcome the temporal boundary by transferring himself beyond it) is not very likely in the case of "naïve" writing, which is usually characterized by egocentrism (i.e. the deictic centre is constituted by the author, and is not transferred to the addressee).

Thus, all three forms of deixis (person, time and space) are involved in a description of some boundaries that the case studies have shown. However, not every type of boundary can be dealt with in the same way. In the case studies about imperative subjects and speech reporting (chapters 5 and 6), concerning personal deixis, the issue is whether or not the boundaries are signalled explicitly, and to what extent context and common ground should be relied on to detect the boundaries. Often no need was perceived for an

explicit signal. In the case studies about the epistolary past tense and assertive declarations (chapters 7 and 8), concerning temporal deixis, it is rather a question of the temporal position which is taken by the author *vis-à-vis* the addressee, or rather, where the temporal origo is situated.

What seems to connect them, though, is "experimentation" with the deictic parameters and the boundaries that arose due to the nature of the written medium in its several applications and functions. We have seen various instances where medieval Novgorodians would assess the implications of these boundaries differently from present-day writers, due to the fairly different function and status of writing. Again, this is to be analyzed as a manifestation of orality, in the sense that this kind of experimentation is a feature of the process of *Verschriftlichung*.

9.2.3 *Context-Dependence*

When it comes to the relation between the birchbark letters and the context in which they were used, we have noticed a fairly high degree of context-dependence. In communicatively heterogeneous texts, this is mainly due to the recreation of an oral setting, which presupposes the presence of a messenger. As to speech reporting, the various strategies are dependent on the context to varying degrees. For the epistolary past tense, context-dependence comes into expression because the past tense refers back to an act which immediately preceded the writing of the letter and which is inextricably linked up with it. The letter is part of a broader transaction and delivery act. Context-dependence is also seen in assertive declarations, viz. in those instances where the assertive record is first dependent on a preceding oral act or ceremony. Later on, trust in writing develops and the act is performed by writing it down, which makes it less context-dependent.

An important part of a letter's context is the messenger or letter-bearer. The concept of a messenger does not play an obvious role in the case study about assertive declarations: the texts in which they occur are usually not letters in the strict sense of the term, and hence not necessarily meant to be delivered to an addressee (though there may be exceptions, such as N384). The other case studies show clear traces of the messenger's role, most notably regarding the category of communicatively heterogeneous letters, as noted by Gippius (2004) already, but also to some extent in instructive reported speech, which can also serve as a mandate, and letters with the epistolary past tense, where a person accompanying the shipment with the letter is inevitable anyway.

9.3 A Transitional Period of *Verschriftlichung*

In spite of the lines that connect them, several case studies also show paradoxical results. A certain linguistic parameter can be perceived as an indicator of the language of proximity, and therefore of orality in Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) "conceptional" sense (see chapter 4), but at the same time it may reflect a feature of the developing language of distance. It is in this sense that the birchbark letters occupy an intermediate position. They function between orality and literacy, in a transitional period of *Verschriftlichung*. The concept op *Verschriftlichung* was briefly explained in § 4.5.2. Recall that it is not just a question of *Verschriftung*, which means that a spoken utterance is written down verbatim, without taking into account the necessity of a greater explicitness in writing. However, a greater explicitness is often necessary because the reader may not have access to the immediate context of the original spoken utterance. Once the writer acknowledges this, he will try to adapt his writing, in order to exclude misunderstandings (for instance in denoting which part of the letter is addressed to whom, or which part of it is direct speech and who utters it). This recognition marks the beginning of the process of *Verschriftlichung*. In our present-day culture, this process has been carried through to a fully-fledged standard written language with rigid conventions. The birchbark letters are situated at a much earlier stage of this process, in a vigorous phase of development. This is why certain observations about the case studies may seem paradoxical at first sight.

For instance, if a letter functions as a mandate, this implies trust in writing, which is a literate feature, but at the same time the letter's function is embedded into an oral encounter between the letter-bearer and the addressee.

To mention another example, the use of the past tense in assertive declarations can be seen as a feature of "creating common ground", because a declaration is made which is meant to announce and consolidate a (legal) act. On the other hand, it may be seen as "exploiting common ground", because it is the result of a common oral agreement which is entrusted to writing. If we stress the assertive component, it is a feature of proximity; if the declarational component is stressed, it is a feature of distance. In other words, on the one hand, the past tense signals that a preceding oral ceremony was primary, which is an oral feature. On the other hand, the past tense (aorist) formulae that were developed in the written medium are a literate feature. So we see oral features that developed explicitly for the written medium. This paradox is illustrative of the whole problem of the dual position which is occupied by the birchbark letters.

In a more theoretical vein, what we have identified as manifestations of orality concerns a mixture of Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) medium and concep-

tion. It should be stressed that the medium is also concerned. In some instances of the language of immediacy, its felicitous use is facilitated by the spoken medium; in others, by the common ground without necessarily involving the spoken medium. Both can be subsumed under "common ground". If the messenger elaborated on the written text, the medium of the communicative act as a whole is not clearly delineated. Medium and conception thereby become more of a blend and less of a dichotomy than Koch & Oesterreicher are willing to acknowledge. Nevertheless, the distinction between medium and conception remains useful. To mention just one example, one paradox (cf. Ducrot 1984) is the following: when the author is not the same as the writer (scribe), this can be an indication of orality (dictation) or, on the contrary, an indication of literacy, because this non-identity is only possible in the written medium. But this goes for many parameters. In cases like these we do need the distinction between medium and conception.

One final issue remains, viz. trust in writing. The two seemingly conflicting views (Gippius 2004/Bulanin 1997 vs. Clanchy 2012) about the topic are too crucial to be left unnoticed. It should not be forgotten that Gippius's (2004) argumentation hinges on trust in writing to a large extent; he stresses the function of quite a few communicatively heterogeneous birchbark letters as being mandates. This often involves that they give accreditation to one participant in the face of another. So ultimately, the issue of trust in writing is relevant and indeed crucial to our topic.

Trust in writing comes most into evidence where letters function as mandates. This we see first of all in communicatively heterogeneous letters, as well as in some instances of reported speech (instructive direct speech). In the case study about the epistolary past tense, it is only marginally touched upon, as sending accompanying letters with shipments was apparently a rather usual procedure. The most crucial function of trust in writing can be seen in the instances of assertive declarations, where the development towards greater context-independence goes hand in hand with an increased role of the written utterance, and hence, a greater trust in writing.

Let us recapitulate the issue (cf. § 4.5.4). The problem of trust in writing in the Middle Ages can be approached from two different (and contradictory or at least paradoxical) angles. One is that documents have an oral residue due to a lack of trust in writing; in other words, trust in writing had to be reinforced orally. The other viewpoint is that a document could serve as a mandate, to give credit to the messenger; this means that the oral message was accredited by the document.

How can these seemingly contradictory viewpoints, as expressed by Bulanin (1997) on the one hand, and Clanchy (2012) on the other, be reconciled, and

what can the birchbark letters tell us about these apparently diverging views? In accordance with Clanchy's theory, letters would be contextualized because they were not trustworthy in themselves; they needed accreditation, either from a messenger, or otherwise, for example when witnesses are enumerated in a will. Bulanin (1997) and Gippius (2004), by contrast, argue that letters were contextualized because they were meant to accredit the messenger (who would elaborate on their contents) and give him a mandate for a specific situation. So either the messenger is in need of authorization, or the letter. This issue is most pressing in our case study about the assertive declarations. A better alternative is that both can reinforce each other, in which case there is an intricate interaction between both directions of accreditation (see below).

Bulanin's theory is quite extreme and far-fetched; he allows for little more than a purely symbolic function of writing, without any real content (i.e. in the initial phase of literacy in Novgorod). But Gippius also speaks about a letter as a mandate. In fact, all authors who raise the matter in connection with the birchbark documents seem to take the same stance: they assume a certain amount of trust in writing which lends authority to the documents.

What do our case studies say about this? As was pointed out above (§ 9.2.3), there does not seem to be a very clear-cut connection with the epistolary past tense (although the letters were sent together with the messenger who also brought the goods, so that we see a kind of mandate for the messenger, too), but the other three case studies would point to the letter as authorizing the messenger or other persons involved.

Again, this seems to be at odds with the theses of Clanchy (2012), Köhn (1998) and others. Obviously, although these authors write about roughly the same period as the birchbark era, their field of study concerns Western Europe, not Russia. In addition, the text types with which they are concerned are generally more of a chancery-type literacy, whereas our birchbark letters are generally more casual and ephemeral. But that is strange: we would rather expect the opposite conclusions to be drawn, i.e. more trust in the official, "chancery-type" parchment documents, and less trust in the short-lived and casual birchbark letters.

An additional problem is that medieval England had witnessed a much longer tradition in writing than Novgorod, where the first birchbark letters appeared only shortly after the advent of Christianity and the simultaneous introduction of writing. If Clanchy's theory can be generalized to apply equally well to medieval Novgorod, it is rather to be expected that trust in writing was not yet fully developed in the birchbark era. After all, the centuries of literary practice in England had provided ample time to develop an attitude of trust in

writing, but still it turned out to be less than fully developed; why, then, should this be different in Novgorod, where much less time had been available for such a process?

The following considerations can be put forward to solve the paradox. The magical power of the written word in combination with oral witness ensured trust in the communication procedure as a whole. Pure and absolute trust in writing is a "medial" concept: it views the written documents as independent from the communicative procedure in which they functioned. In that sense, trust in writing is an anachronism. In medieval England as well as Novgorod, documents never functioned independently, and as such they did not inspire trust; it was rather the way in which they were used that mattered. This mode of use often involved a messenger.

On the one hand, the messenger is responsible for the message to come through as it was meant; oral elaboration is often necessary for this, due to the elliptic nature of the texts themselves (think of, e.g., the absence of an imperative subject). On the other hand, the document is meant to confirm the credibility of the messenger. This (to our minds) circular way of reasoning would not suffice to generate trust in our day. In medieval Novgorod, though, it was apparently a sufficient and usual communicative procedure.

So on the one hand, the messenger is trustworthy enough to elaborate on the written message. On the other hand, the messenger needs accreditation by means of a document. This would mean that the document and the messenger are in close interaction, which is a sign of context-dependence. A messenger who is accredited by a document is still a messenger who brings an oral message.

What we see, then, is a pervasive interdependence of speech and writing in the medial sense, but this has consequences for the conception (in Koch & Oesterreicher's (1985) terms). In other words, the letter and the messenger are mutually dependent and in close interaction with each other, and this is reflected in the way in which the letter is phrased (for instance, in its elliptical wording). In this way, the theories of Clanchy and Bulanin are not necessarily contradictory, but the interdependence of both reflects the transitional nature of birchbark communication.

9.4 Final Remarks

We can now recapitulate once more what the present study has added to the initial pragmaphilological research enterprise by Gippius (2004) and the field of berestology in general. It has become clear that the phenomenon of

communicative heterogeneity is clearly embedded in a wider array of oral features, which are reflected in several linguistic features.

I have demonstrated the coherence of the case studies by extracting common elements that connect them. From this, a general picture starts emerging. We cannot describe linguistic features as such to be elements of orality. Rather, the linguistic features tell us something about the way in which orality is reflected in the language, in interaction with developing literary habits.

Certain elements of Gippius's (2004) theory have been corroborated, such as the letters' context-dependence. In addition, the area of the language of immediacy has turned out to be broader than just the category of communicative heterogeneity, especially in its connection to instructive direct speech. In other respects, the birchbark letters turned out to show more of a development towards the language of distance, such as the increasing use of the aorist for assertive declarations.

Trust in writing has turned out to be a more delicate and complicated phenomenon than Gippius (2004) seems to assume. It is not fruitful to play the two conflicting theories (Clanchy vs. Bulanin/Gippius) off against each other. Both are entitled to be credited. What we see in the birchbark letters is a rather intricate interwovenness of the two in a way that does not allow one to do without the other.

Thus, we have seen several ways in which the degree of orality and the development of literacy can be traced throughout the birchbark corpus, in connection with the use of various linguistic features. An outcome in diachronic terms is viable only for two out of the four case studies (speech reporting and assertive declarations). Hence, tracing a movement from orality towards literacy for the corpus as a whole is problematic, and has, for the time being, been demonstrated in merely tentative terms.

Our whole theme is not only the result of "medium-transcoding", as Oesterreicher (1997, 196) seems to suggest.[1] In other words, writers of birchbark letters did not simply write down exactly the same things which they would otherwise and in earlier times have pronounced orally (*Verschriftung*). What they did write down, however, resulted in a rather complex interplay of strategies of adaptation to the written medium that led to new communicatory phenomena (*Verschriftlichung*).

1 "As a matter of fact, it is precisely this property of language to undergo such processes of medium-transfer or transcoding that is the very condition of the existence of our orality in text problem."

We can conclude that the pragmaphilological approach to the birchbark letters has been fruitful, building on and stretching beyond its first implementation by Gippius (2004). Its further application will be able to show us more of the birchbark letters' characteristics in the field of orality in due time. After all, almost every year a number of new birchbark letters are excavated; this leaves the field with a promising perspective for the future, as the steadily accumulating number of texts provides us with an increasingly accurate picture of communication on birchbark.

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Index of Authors

Ágel, V. 43
Archer, D. 39
Arcixovskij, A.V. 57n6
Ariel, M. 61
Austin, J.L. 139–142

Bakhtin, M. 72
Bary, C. 154–157, 160, 170
Bjørnflaten, J.I. 169
Bogoch, B. 157–158
Borkovskij, V.I. 57n6
Brown, G. 86
Brown, P. 107
Bsees, U. 140n3, 153n
Bulanin, D. 25–26, 45, 167, 184–187
Bulaxovskij, L.A. 103
Busse, B. 59–60

Čerepnin, L.V. 63
Chafe, W. 94n12
Charpin, D. 16n
Clanchy, M.T. 9, 16, 45–46, 184–187
Clark, H.H. 22, 51, 59, 94, 107, 178
Collins, D.E. 26n, 38, 74, 76–77, 81–82, 89, 91, 94–96, 102–105, 107–109, 113, 165
Coulmas, F. 72, 74–75, 84, 93
Couper-Kuhlen, E. 75
Culpeper, J. 39, 44, 96, 178

Danet, B. 157–158
Davies, E. 55, 57–58
Dekker, S. 51n, 115n
Dickey, S.M. 140, 156
Diem, W. 153n
Ducrot, O. 184

Fillmore, C.J. 126
Fischer, O. 36
Fitzmaurice, S.M. 39, 46
Fortuin, E.L.J. 55–56, 58, 115n
Franklin, S. 8–9

Gernsbacher, M.A. 59
Gerrig, R.J. 107, 111
Gerritsen, W.P. 36
Gippius, A.A. 1, 14, 18–19, 22–27, 29, 32–33, 38–40, 42, 51, 55n, 63–69, 86, 109, 112–113, 122–124, 128, 135, 145, 164, 174, 177–179, 182, 184–188
Givón, T. 59
Grenoble, L.A. 127, 129
Guidi, G. 129

Halliday, M.A.K. 59–62, 68–69
Harnish, R.M. 144
Hasan, R. 59–62, 68–69
Heimpel, W. 129
Hennig, M. 43
Hillers, D.R. 147n
Hindelang, G. 140

Jacobs, A. 38
Jespersen, O. 74
Jucker, A.H. 32, 38, 47

Kamphuis, J. 156
Khalil, A. 153
Koch, P. 40–44, 97n, 98, 104, 106, 113, 175, 183–184, 186
Köhn, R. 45, 185
Kohnen, T. 153n, 157
Kolesov, V.V. 91, 146n6
Kopaczyk, J. 39
Koschmieder, E. 139–140
Kytö, M. 44, 178

Labocha, J. 76
Labov, W. 14
Lakoff, R.T. 120
Lazar, M. 111
Leech, G.N. 37, 71, 82, 86, 93–95
Létoublon, F. 127, 135
Levinson, S.C. 107, 125
Li, C.N. 73–74
Lopatina, L.E. 90
Lyons, J. 120

Maier, E. 104
Martinich, A. 144
Matthews, D. 169
McCarus, E. 153

Mendoza, I. 122, 126
Moon, G.G. 55
Moulton, J.H. 121

Nørgård-Sørensen, J. 117n
Nutting, H.C. 122

Oesterreicher, W. 187, *see also* Koch, P.
Ong, W.J. 40

Pander Maat, H. 59
Pardee, D. 121, 129, 132, 166
Percov, N.V. 116
Petruxin, P. 146n6, 161n, 169
Plank, F. 94, 97n, 98, 101, 104
Procházka, S. 140n3, 153n

Rogland, M. 121, 131, 137, 151, 153
Roncador, M. von 74

Sanders, T. 59
Schaeken, J. 6n3, 13n8, 25–29, 36, 38–39, 55n, 58n, 86, 109, 115n
Schuelke, G.L. 102
Searle, J.R. 141–146, 158, 165, 172, 175
Semino, E. 96
Short, M.H. 71, 82, 86, 93–96
Škrabec, S. 140
Söll, L. 40
Sreznevskij, I.I. 56n, 58n, 127, 163n, 167n

Taavitsainen, I. 32, 39, 46–47
Tannen, D. 102
Tanskanen, S.-K. 59
Thomas, R. 8, 16n
Turner, N. 121

Vermeer, W. 11n, 12
Voeste, A. 97n, 101

Wagner, A. 139n, 151
Weninger, S. 153, 154n
Whiting, R.M. 129, 132, 166

Yule, G. 86

Zaliznjak, A.A. 1, 11, 53–54, 56, 104, 112, 133n, 137–139, 160–162, 164, 167, 175

Index of Subjects

Assertive declaration 139, 142–152, 158–162, 165–175, 177, 179, 181–185, 187
Assertive 142, 145–150, 159, 164–166, 168, 170–173, 183

Basic language setting 22, 51, 70, 178
Berestology 1, 29, 39, 186

Christianity 8, 25, 40, 185
Chronology 1, 4, 66, 84, 88, 90–92, 122, 150, 161, 168–170, 187
Coherence 51, 59, 61n8, 62–63, 68–70
Cohesion 52, 59, 62, 68–70
Commissive 142–143, 150
Common ground 96, 100, 106–110, 183–184
Context 14, 23, 25, 46, 70, 78, 86–90, 94–95, 107, 109, 183
Context-dependence 25, 33, 45, 67, 71, 90, 96–97, 102, 104, 106, 108, 114, 159, 177–178, 180, 182, 184, 186–187

Data problem (bad) 14, 95n14, 117, 122, 163, 168
Dating 1, 4
Declaration 137, 142–150, 157, 159, 163, 165, 170–174, 183
Deixis 37, 74, 77–81, 88, 94–98, 110, 125–130, 133, 136
  Personal 164, 180–181
  Shifted 75, 78, 83n, 94, 97–101, 106, 128–129
  Temporal 112, 126–129, 181–182
  Transparent 82–83, 103
Dictation 16, 29, 44–45, 111–112, 132, 161, 164–166, 173, 179, 184
Directives 142–143, 150, 160–161, 163–165, 167

English
  Modern 54, 57, 59, 73, 84, 103–104, 117, 122, 134–135, 140–141, 153, 159, 171
  Old 149, 151, 153n, 157–160, 172
Excavations 1–4, 7, 27, 188
Expressive 142–143, 150, 166–167

Formula 5–6, 16, 23, 89, 112, 118, 132, 133n, 148, 166, 169–172, 175, 183

Genre 5, 7, 44–45, 65, 121, 169, 178
German 44, 101, 109, 140n2
Greek 7, 28, 104, 120–121, 133–135, 151, 153–157

Heterogeneity, communicative 18–25, 28–29, 31–33, 39, 51, 58, 62–70, 99, 105, 113–114, 177–187
  Hidden 20, 24, 51, 66, 70
  Overt 21, 78n

Inference 96
Interference (authorial) 93, 96–97, 101
Interpunction *see* punctuation

Latin 9–10, 115, 120–121, 135
Letter-bearer 10, 22, 24, 26, 64, 67, 118, 122, 124, 127, 183, *see also* messenger

Messenger 7, 10, 15, 22–29, 43, 45, 67–70, 104–114, 119, 122, 124n, 126, 165n25, 177, 179, 182–186, *see also* letter-bearer

Origo 100, 127, 182

Parchment documents 1, 12, 21, 46, 53n2, 67–68, 125, 132, 138, 144, 163, 169, 171–172, 174, 185
Pluperfect 54, 145–146, 161n, 162
Polyphony 72, 87
Pragmaphilology 31–32, 36–39, 46, 48, 64n13, 65, 77, 86, 117, 164, 177, 186, 188
Punctuation 21n, 73, 77

Russian (modern) 7, 11, 54, 56, 81, 103, 116–117, 121, 153, 155, 160n20

Semitic languages 121, 129, 131–132, 135, 137, 147n, 151–154, 166, 171, 174
Slavonic, (Old) Church 9, 11–12, 74, 107, 156, 169
Slipping 102–105, 107
Sociolinguistic(s) 12
Spelling 5, 11, 58n
Subordination (syntactic) 82, 83n, 172

Tag *see verbum dicendi*
Trust in writing 25–26, 45–46, 182–187

Verbatim 74, 98, 165, 183
Verbum dicendi 73, 80, 82–85, 89, 95, 102, 112, 174
Verschriftlichung 43–44, 114, 175, 177, 182–183, 187
Verschriftung 43–44, 149, 183, 187
Vocative 17, 22, 33, 53, 60–70, 74n, 78, 100